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THE TIMES OF INDIA

INCLUDES 18 PAGES OF BANGALORE TIMES AND 20 PAGES OF FABULOUS FEBRUARY

INDIA'S LARGEST ENGLISH NEWSPAPER

Canada PM Mark Carney arrives in Mumbai for 4-day India visit in a bid to reset frayed ties and boost trade, to meet PM Modi on Monday

'Probe Can't Be Allowed To Enter Political Arena On Mere Allegation Of Spending For Polls... It Would Arm Exec With Coercive Instruments Capable Of Influencing Political Outcomes'

'Fails judicial scrutiny': Kejriwal, Sisodia discharged in CBI's excise policy case

Court Clears All 21 Other Accused Also

Abhinav Garg & Koushiki Saha

New Delhi: A Delhi court discharged on Friday AAP supremo and former Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal, former deputy CM Manish Sisodia, former BRS MLC K Kavitha and 20 others in a corruption case related to the alleged excise policy scam, criticising the manner in which the probe was conducted by CBI and bringing the case to a halt at its very first stage of framing charges.

In its 598-page order, special judge Jitendra Singh of Rouse Avenue courts came down heavily on the prosecution, observing that the "voluminous chargesheet" of thousands of pages contained several lacunae without support from witness statements or admissible evidence.

"To compel the accused to face the rigours of a full-fledged criminal trial in the stark absence of any legally admissible material connecting them to the alleged offences would not serve the ends of justice; it would instead constitute a manifest miscarriage of justice and an abuse of the criminal process, offending the most basic tenets of fairness and the rule of law," the court noted. It pointed to "misleading averments" and internal contradictions that struck "at the very root of the alleged conspiracy theory". It held that the prosecution's case did not disclose "even the threshold of a prima facie suspicion", as projected by CBI, thus making the claims "wholly unable to survive judicial scrutiny and discredited in entirety".

The matter arose from allegations that the 2021-22 policy, which sought to privatise liquor trade, granted undue advantage to private entities at the cost of the public exchequer and "smacked of corruption", as alleged by CBI and ED. The policy was later withdrawn.

FULL COVERAGE: PAGE 6
EDIT: Elementary, sleuths
▶Continued on P 6

'NO CONSPIRACY OR CRIMINAL INTENT'

WHAT THE COURT SAID

- There was no overarching conspiracy or criminal intent... **Criminal law can't be used to retrospectively criminalise policy choices** or market consequences... Economic gain, uneven commercial outcomes or subsequent profitability cannot, by themselves, constitute conspiracy
- Where the prosecution case rests substantially, or rather exclusively, on the statement of an approver... if the **incriminating material consists solely of uncorroborated statement of such a witness, it can't be regarded as sufficient** to justify framing of charge
- **...Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere...** let justice be done though the heavens may fall
- The judicial task is neither to secure a convenient outcome nor to endorse a dominant narrative, but to uphold the rule of law
- **Liberty, once curtailed, cannot be meaningfully restored by a subsequent acquittal**, nor can passage of time compensate for loss occasioned by unwarranted pre-trial detention

Arvind Kejriwal is consoled by Manish Sisodia after he broke down while speaking to reporters

Kejriwal Was Jailed For About 5 Months

March 21, 2024 | ED arrests Kejriwal
May 10 | SC gives him interim bail till June 1 to campaign for LS polls
June 20 | Trial court grants him regular bail, but Delhi HC stays order on June 25 after ED challenges it. On same day, CBI also arrests him
July 12 | SC grants interim bail but he stays in custody due to CBI arrest
Sept 13 | Granted bail in CBI case also

Sisodia About 17 Months

Feb 26, 2023 | CBI arrests Sisodia after 8 hours of questioning. ED arrests him 12 days later. SC gives him bail on Aug 9, 2024

"**Maine bas imandari kamai hai...** Modi, Shah wanted to dent that... The judge has shown extreme courage when every institution and authority has been intimidated... I **challenge PM Modi to hold fresh polls in Delhi and if BJP wins over 10 seats, I will quit politics** —ARVIND KEJRIWAL | AAP CONVENER

"Despite all the attempts by BJP and its agencies to prove us dishonest, today it has been established that Arvind Kejriwal and Manish Sisodia are honest —MANISH SISODIA

"Satyamev Jayate. This (case) was a web of lies. Judiciary has cut right through it —K KAVITHA

Court orders inquiry against probe officer

Recommending a departmental inquiry against CBI's investigating officer for framing Kuldeep Singh, an official of the excise department, the court said the agency's case stood exposed as "**demonstrably erroneous, economically illiterate and legally unsustainable**", and accountability needed to be fixed. Rapping the conduct of the IO, the court said it was "constrained to observe that such a course of action **reduces the investigative process to a self-serving exercise, where legal technicalities are invoked not to uncover the truth, but to shield investigative lapses** and to construct a post-facto defence in the event that suppression or distortion of material facts is exposed during judicial scrutiny. **Such conduct amounts to a conscious abuse of official position."** P6

CBI moves HC, wants remarks expunged

CBI moved Delhi HC against the Rouse Avenue court's order, contending that several aspects of the investigation were either ignored or not considered adequately. Apart from seeking a revision of the order, CBI may also seek expunging of the remarks made in the order, including action recommended against IO. **P6**

BJP: Guilty in eyes of Delhi; Cong sees plot

Arvind Kejriwal is guilty before the people of Delhi and the court verdict is not the final truth, CM Rekha Gupta said, adding truth will prevail. Congress's Pawan Khera insinuated that a hidden BJP hand had sought to prop up "convenient ally" AAP in an election year to damage Congress. **P6**

Pak declares 'open war' on Afghanistan after clashes

Islamabad: Pakistan bombed major cities in Afghanistan, including capital Kabul on Friday, with Islamabad's defence minister declaring the neighbours at "open war" following months of tit-for-tat clashes.

Pakistan claimed to have killed more than 270 Taliban fighters and injured over 400 others in airstrikes while Afghanistan's Taliban govt spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said its forces killed 55 Pakistani soldiers and targeted what he described as "important military objectives" inside Pakistan.

Pakistan's defence minister Khawaja Asif said Taliban had "turned Afghanistan into a colony of India" instead of focusing on development and regional stability. "They gathered all the terrorists of the world in Afghanistan and began exporting terrorism," he alleged, without providing any evidence in support of his claim. AGENCIES

▶Contd on: Other bk, P 9

22 DEF TARGETS HIT IN 3 AF PROVINCES

"Our patience has run out... **Now it will be 'dama dam mast qalandar'.** Pak army didn't come from across the seas. We are your neighbours; we know your ins and outs —Khawaja Asif PAK DEF MINISTER

Photo: Reuters

A Taliban soldier loads a rocket launcher near Torkham border

"Our hand can reach their collar. Any malicious act by Pak will be answered in Islamabad —Taliban govt

- Pak forces hit 22 defence targets in Kabul, Kandahar, and Paktia provinces
- Islamabad says it is **responding to militant attacks** from Af territory. **Taliban denies** its soil is being used against Pak
- Pak says **274 Taliban regime members and 12 Pak soldiers killed**, while **Taliban claim 55 Pak soldiers** and 13 of its own forces dead

India monitoring Af-Pak situation

India is monitoring the situation even as it has maintained that Pakistan's cross-border adventurism is nothing but a ploy to deflect attention from its domestic failures. The Indian govt called Pakistan's airstrikes earlier this week an attempt to externalise internal failures. **Other bk, P 9**

US asks its staff to leave Jerusalem

US has told non-emergency staff at its embassy in Jerusalem they're allowed to leave, as US considers strikes on Iran which might spark retaliation against Israel. Other countries, including UK, China and India, have advised citizens or diplomats to leave parts of Middle East. **Other bk, P 9**

SC warns against creating anti-investment climate

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New Delhi: The Supreme Court has said constitutional courts must be careful in exercising judicial review of laws so as not to create an anti-investment atmosphere and should weigh national interest against hypothetical fears about legislation.

A bench of CJI Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi made these observations on Friday during preliminary hearing on a PIL by E A S Sarma, whose counsel Prashant Bhushan faulted the liability fastened on private players operating nuclear power plants under the Sustainable Harnessing and Advancing of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Act passed in Dec.

Bhushan said that the private players' liability is capped at Rs 3,000 crore even though a nuclear plant accident could cause damage running into lakhs of crores of rupees and cited the Chernobyl and Fukushima nuclear disasters. The govt has allowed private players in the nuclear sector but absolves them of strict civil liability clauses, he said, adding that the govt's liability is also capped at Rs 4,500 crore.

▶Continued on page 12

Convicts to UP judge: 'We know where you live'

Moments after Bijnor additional district and sessions court sentenced two men to life in prison in a murder case on Thursday, the convicts sent out a chilling threat to the judge, telling him they knew where he lived and that they would kill him, **reports Harveer Dabas**. In the courtroom, Jaideep Singh, 35, and Pintu Chauhan, 30, said they would not spare the 28-year-old daughter of the man they had murdered in May 2014. It was on the woman's complaint that an FIR had been filed against them. **P5**

A decade on, Free Runners still going the distance

From Boston Marathon qualifier to habitual half-marathon runner, group celebrates shared success of its members

Mini.thomas@timesofindia.com

Free Runners turned 10 on Feb 22, celebrating the milestone at RMV Club near HIG Colony with banter, nostalgia and emotional moments.

Manju Mittur, 45, from Kolar-the fastest in the group-missed the event for good reason. He qualified for the Boston Marathon in the Delhi Marathon held on Feb 22 and made Free Runners proud on its special day.

"The next few months are crucial. I'm focusing on strength training now," said Manju.

The milestones are striking. Six-year-old Ishaan who studies in Ramaiah Vidyaniketan has completed a 3K run. Rohit Maiya recently ran his 425th consecutive half-marathon. Shaila Banu, a Pinkathon ambassador, has completed 50K, while Dr Madhushree Vijaykumar, a gynaecologist, has finished 100K.

Shashikumar, a long-distance runner since 2017, said the group celebrates every milestone together. "Free Runners motivates you to be your best self," said the 43-year-old production manager. "We happily support fellow runners — whether it's maintaining target pace, completing long-distance runs, or pushing through tough weekend runs. Every achievement is celebrated."

> I'm preparing for the Boston Marathon, the oldest marthon in the world. Free Runners has pooled money and bought me running shoes. Satish Ananathaiyer, a fellow runner, is my running coach and mentor. He is the one who inspired me to chase my dream.
> **Manju Mittur** | RUNNER

Anyone who has completed a half-marathon (21.1K) can join the club. "We encourage everyone to lace up, enjoy the sport, and be there for one another," said Santosh, an avid runner.

What began as a small, motley group has grown into a close-knit running family, with Sunday runs around Sankey Tank cementing bonds.

Shashikumar, long-distance runner

Beyond the LIFT LOBBY

Brewing 'Namma' community in a B'luru apartment

Apartment living comes with its own quirks & challenges. **Tina Shashikanth** explores how buildings full of strangers can transform into thriving support networks

Bengaluru carries many identities - Garden City, pub capital, India's Silicon Valley. For its residents, it is also the city of chronic traffic jams, sudden downpours, and the ubiquitous apartment complexes.

Whether you live in a sprawling gated community in Whitefield or a modest building in Malleswaram, apartment living has become a defining Bengaluru experience. Despite being stacked vertically in close quarters, it is surprisingly easy to feel disconnected in a city known for its warm 'Namma Bengaluru' vibe.

We move into our flat, exchange polite nods in the lift, and retreat behind our closed doors. Yet, as many of us discovered, especially post-pandemic, a building is more than concrete and glass - it is a potential lifeline, an ecosystem waiting to happen.

So, how do we break the ice and transform a cluster of flats into a true 'Namma' community? Here are a few simple, Bengaluru-centric ideas.

A COMMUNITY THAT TRAVELS TOGETHER STAYS TOGETHER: A recent heritage trip to Halebidu, where nearly 115 residents of Prestige Jindal City came together in a remarkable celebration of community spirit (below) The jubilant winners of the Sobha Royal Pavilion Premier League cricket

THE TERRACE FILTER COFFEE MEET-UP OR 'CHAI & CHARCHA'

In Bengaluru, filter coffee isn't just a hot drink, it's a real connector. And if your favourite tipple is chai, that works too

THE IDEA: Hold a monthly meet-up, and designate a different terrace or balcony as the 'coffee spot.' One neighbour can volunteer to brew the filter coffee decoction, and others can bring their own cups and snacks. For chai, pick a relaxed weekend evening. Someone can bring a flask of hot masala chai, and another can bring some bajjis or chaat from the neighbourhood vendor. Sit on the stairs, benches, or by the gate - any spot where it's easy to strike up a conversation.

WHY IT WORKS: It is informal, and it is on home turf. It's a great way for those working from home to meet the retired couple who have lived in the area for decades and know the best local vendors. This is the time to catch up on local gossip and get the best recommendations – for local plumbers and electricians, the best thindi spots for breakfast and good house helps.

THE 'GULLY CRICKET' LEAGUE

Space may be limited in Bengaluru, but the love for cricket is not

THE IDEA: Organise a quarterly 'tennis ball tournament' in the parking lot (when it's free) or at the nearest available ground. Form teams by floor: 'Ground Floor Giants' vs. 'Third Floor Strikers'.

THE PAYOFF: Nothing breaks down barriers like a little healthy competition. The introverted coder from 4B becomes a hero if she hits a six, and the quiet gentleman from 2A may emerge as the team's biggest cheerleader.

THE APARTMENT SHOPPING CHAIN

Let's be honest — the weekend grocery run can be a chore, especially with traffic and the parking hassles

THE IDEA: Create a \WhatsApp group called 'Market Runs'. Instead of multiple families taking making the same supermarket trip, one person can volunteer each weekend, while others text their shopping lists. This responsibility rotates every week.

WHY IT WORKS: It saves fuel, reduces parking congestion, and builds a beautiful system of trust and interdependence.

> Apartment communities often become the first circle of belonging in a home-away-from-home. From joyful mother-child poolside celebrations to buses full of ladies off to lunch, and vibrant Children's Day festivities, these traditions keep our bonds strong and our family spirit thriving at our apartment.
> **Meghna Gaur** | HARA VIJAYA HEIGHTS, KANAKAPURA ROAD

> In a community of over 3,700 units and 10,000 people, it is easy to feel like a stranger. But initiatives like a walking group that started with a few people and grew to 150 can do wonders. The group now celebrates birthdays together, wears matching T-shirts, and it's a visual treat. My personal favourite is our weekend Kannada class - we have over 100 people from all over India learning the language. It is these small, fun-filled activities that truly build a community.
> **Prasad CP** | PRESTIGE JINDAL CITY, NAGASANDRA

> Everyone is busy, we don't often build connections beyond courtesy calls. To change that, in our community, we have created small focus groups within our large WhatsApp network — dedicated to interests such as badminton, cricket, gardening, and CSR activities. We began with just 5-10 people in each group. Over the last two years, some have grown to 300, 400, or even 1,000 members. Beyond digital connections, we also celebrate events and festivals inclusively. We even held a cricket tournament recently.
> **Prateek Saraf** | SOBHA ROYAL PAVILION, SARJAPUR ROAD

THE VENDOR BULLETIN

In the traditional Bengaluru vathaaras (neighbourhoods), the vegetable vendor's bell used to be a signal for gathering. You can recreate that network in apartment complexes too

THE IDEA: Maintain a shared digital message board - or a physical one near the letterboxes - for local vendor details and updates. "The mango seller is at the gate!" or "Does anyone have the bicycle repair guy's number?"

WHY IT HELPS: It reinforces the idea that you are a community that looks out for one another, sharing resources and local knowledge.

THE TAKEAWAY

In a city that never really sleeps, where the next job, the next rental agreement, or the next traffic jam is always around the corner, our apartment complexes are modern-day village squares – the Aralikatte (Peepal tree platform).

Building a community doesn't require a grand budget or a huge event. It starts with a simple 'hello' in the lift or a quick "Tumba busy naa?" (Are you very busy?) instead of just rushing past.

So, the next time you hear the sizzle from your neighbour's kitchen and the tantalizing aroma of biryani wafts through the corridor, knock on their door.

Share a meal. Share a story. Let's make our apartment buildings not just a place to live, but a place to belong - because in the end, a true Bengaluru experience is not just about the pubs or parks—it is also about the people who turn a house into a hearty Mane (home).

So, knock on your neighbour's door. Share a meal. Share a story. Let's make our apartment complexes a place to belong. Bengaluru's charm is not just in its pubs or parks — it is in the people who turn a house into a hearty Mane (home).

LEARN SPOKEN KANNADA

We continue the Kannada learning series, designed by Makaranda. Use the QR code to get to an audio file that will help you with pronunciations.

Website : https://makaranda-er12.onrender.com

QR code for Lesson 5B audio file

Lesson 5 Part B

Conversations are a powerful tool for building vocabulary. Let us learn some new words through a conversation between two friends.

WORDS TABLE

Kannada	English
iSHTa	Like
prasiddha	famous
haNa	money
eNNe	oil

SINGULAR/PLURAL

tinDi	tinDigaLu
dOse	dOsegaLu
aNgaDi	aNgaDigaLu

THE STUDENT IS HEADING TO THE METRO STATION. HE CONVERSES WITH THE AUTO DRIVER AND THE FELLOW PASSENGER

How to Pronounce	Meaning In English
banni illE Metro da hattira tiNDi tinnONa.	Come on, let's have breakfast near the metro station itself.
sari.	Ok.
Menu nalli, nimage yaava tiNDi iSHTa?	What do you like on the menu?
nanage masaale dOse tumbaa iSHTa	I like masala dosa very much.
aadare, eNNe jaasti adaralli.	However, there is more oil in it.
tondare illa, kaDime eNNe haaki maaDi anta hELONa.	It's OK, let's tell them to use less oil.
aagali. ee aNgaDiyalli dose gari gari yaagi, ruchiyaagi irutte.	Alright. In this shop, the dosa is crispy and tasty.
howdu. ee angaDi tumbaa prasiddha.	Yes, this restaurant is very famous.
oh! sari tumbaa haNa maaDtirabahudu alvaa?	Oh! they must be making a lot of money, right ?
howdu, khanDitavaagi.	Yes, definitely
dose bantu, tinni.	The dosa has come. Please eat.
oh! sakkat aagide.	Oh! it's fantastic.
dhanyavaadagaLu.	Thank you.

Exercises: Section 1

Match the following and write the serial numbers of your answers in column K

Kannada Word (K)	English Equivalent(E)	K
1.aNgaDi	a. Oil	
2.iSHta	b. famous	
3.eNNe	c. entire	
4.tondare	d. more	
5.kaDime	e. shop	
6.prasiddha	f. put	
7.iDee	g. problem	
8.haaki	h. like	
9.jaasti	i. less/little	

Answer Keys for previous lesson (5A Section2)

Section 1: Match the following

K1-Eh, K2-Ei, K3-Ef, K4-Eg, K5-Ed, K6-Ee, K7-Ec, K8-Eb, K9-Ea

Exercises: Section 2

Translate the following sentences into Kannada. Read out the sentences, record your voice, and upload the recordings by scanning the QR code below by March 1,2026 (Sunday), 11: 59pm. Top three submissions will be recognized next week.

1.Which is your favourite breakfast?
2.It contains too much oil and is unhealthy.
3. The restaurant is quite famous.
4.They make a lot of money.
5. The restaurant is profitable.

Note: Answer keys for this lesson will be published next week.

Winners of the contest Lesson 4C Section2

Vijayan Nair | Lakshmi Narayanaswa | Gaanashree

Write in to **timescommunity@timesofindia.com** with your photo

Govt agency for domestic worker registration need of the hour

EMAILS FROM READERS

Your story on the challenges of monitoring domestic workers was insightful.

At Prestige Westwoods, where I stay, residents must register domestic workers by submitting ID copies, rental agreements and photographs. The association issues ID cards and lists their names on the apartment ERP, but there is no address verification.

Many workers are from other states and frequently change residences, making tracking difficult. There have been theft cases. While residents approach the police, the association assists by sharing entry-exit records and CCTV footage.

Though police verification is mandatory, workers are hesitant to visit police stations. A govt nodal agency to handle registration and verification, especially of interstate workers, would help address these gaps.

Satish G | BAF GC MEMBER AND EX-SECRETARY, PRESTIGE WESTWOODS

Superglue, twine, needle and thread are essential tools for this sustainability expert

DIY repair gave this sofa a makeover paired with discarded window netlon

A burn mark in a nightie camouflaged with embroidery

Thank you for your amazing article about normalising repair culture. The new concept of 'Repair Cafes' is a great nudge for Bengalureans to embrace sustainable habits that help our planet.

My father was a repair expert, and the habit therefore came naturally. So, superglue, twine, needle & thread, screwdriver, etc are essential tools I use regularly.

One past repair story involved my cat making a hole under the sofa to hide during Diwali from the noise of crackers. When I sat on the sofa the week after, I heard a crack and the sofa sank to the floor. I got a carpenter to repair the metal frame for just Rs 300. However, the bottom had holes, which I repaired using a discarded window netlon that fit perfectly. Two hours with a needle, and the sofa was as good as new. My cat, however, needed a new place to hide.

In my repair kit, I have a special curved needle which worked perfectly for this repair. A straight needle would have taken far longer.

Many think those who repair are stingy. A house help once glanced scornfully at chappals I'd kept for the cobbler, saying, "We just throw and buy new." My reply was: "I can afford a new pair, but our planet cannot."

Indeed, our earth is in need of repair – we all need to repair more and buy less. Why discard anything before its time. The local cobbler, tailor, and appliance repair shops are important contacts we must all make.

Odette Katrak | SUSTAINABILITY CHANGE-MAKER & FOUNDER, BEAUTIFUL BHARAT

Lord Krishna's life on stage

Salarpuria Sattva Magnificia on Old Madras Road staged Krishna – The Divine Journey, a play designed to instil faith and values in children.

The production traced key episodes from Lord Krishna's life, drawing lessons from Indian mythology. Organisers said the initiative aimed to cultivate patience, care, teamwork, resilience, responsibility and mutual respect, while sharpening acting skills. Rehearsals were held over three-and-a-half months.

The play featured 51 children aged between three and 14.

"The children had a platform to showcase their acting and dancing skills. Learning to handle props and perform on stage boosted their confidence and helped them express themselves with pride and joy," said Radha Murali, part of the training team.

She added that the performance went beyond costumes and dialogues — it was about planting seeds of culture, character, devotion and inner strength in young hearts. TNN

Apartment play blends mythology with practical lessons

City to celebrate Holi with gusto

Sobha Indraprastha apartment in Rajajinagar hosted a pre-Holi celebration for senior citizens on Feb 26, complete with cultural programmes.

Diepa Jain and Sumita Agiwal led the festivities. A skit on modern 'saas-bahu' dynamics was among the highlights, with Nina Jain and Savitha Chauhan delivering a stellar performance. Usha Baldwa and Sneha Pitalya added sparkle with a dance recital.

Suman, a resident of Nandi Manomay, said women and children in the society plan to celebrate Holi together with colours, sweets and savouries.

While the festival falls on March 4 this year, Vespers Apartment in Shanti Nagar will celebrate it on Feb 28 to make the most of the weekend, with support staff also welcome to join in the festivities. TNN

Residents of Nandi Manomay are gearing up for Holi

3 bylaws in 2 years, yet banners & festoons flourish on B'luru roads

Officials Blame Staff Shortage For Laxity

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Pics: TOI

WHOSE ROAD IS IT? Cutouts and banners are erected on footpaths & near traffic signals in the city, often supported by large wooden frames

Bengaluru: Cutouts, hoardings and banners are fast emerging as a safety threat for commuters in the city. With Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) elections around the corner, 'Happy Birthday' banners and posters of new political faces have mushroomed across all five city corporation limits.

Cutouts are erected on footpaths and near traffic signals, often supported by large wooden frames. At Kundalahalli Circle on Old Airport Road, a giant cutout was recently placed directly in front of a traffic signal, obstructing visibility. After complaints, local traffic police ensured the banner was removed. However, the 20ft-tall wooden structure was left on the footpath. Similar structures can be seen across the city.

A local traffic cop told **TOI**: "We made multiple calls to get the banner removed. We don't even know when it was placed there. While we managed to remove the cutout, the structure remained. We'll ask GBA to get that removed as well."

The civic authority introduced a new advertisement policy in Jan to auction advertising rights. However, on the ground, banners and flex boards continue to mushroom. This is the third such bylaw in the past two years. Corporations say they are still working on implementing the policy.

Ashish Nair, a resident of east Bengaluru, said: "The red light isn't optional; neither is someone's safety. I commute daily via the Kundalahalli flyover, where the red signal regulates a busy intersection. Recently, a poster temporarily covered the signal, posing serious risks. Traffic signs must remain clearly visible. I raised the issue with traffic police, but was advised to approach GBA. Ensuring signals remain unobstructed should fall within the responsibility of traffic authorities."

While corporations claim they are removing illegal flexes, officials admit enforcement is difficult because of limited manpower. Commissioners say that even after banners are cleared overnight, new ones appear the following day.

Ramesh, from South city corporation, said, "We're yet to call for tenders under the recent advertisement policy. There is strictly no provision to permit banners or flexes, so all these hoardings are illegal. The moment we are informed, we remove them. But with limited staff, we cannot monitor every corner."

Pommala Sunil Kumar, commissioner of South city corporation, said, "Handling banners and flexes has become a major problem. Even political parties must adhere to the blanket ban. It is difficult to identify who is putting them up unless there are CCTV cameras nearby. We cannot file an FIR without identifying the offenders. We'll find ways to tackle this."

Residents say the issue goes beyond aesthetics. Selvarajan from Yelahanka said, "These flex boards are harmful and mostly put up by political or religious groups. As citizens, we feel voiceless. Cloth festoons hanging from central barricades also pose a risk to vehicles. In Delhi, restrictions on advertisements helped. In Chennai, giant cutouts fell on commuters, causing deaths. Flex boards are environmentally harmful and dangerous."

H Eswarappa, from south Bengaluru, said: "First, plastic banners add to rubbish. Second, they distract riders near signals, increasing the risk of accidents. My biggest concern is distraction and safety."

With polls nearing, residents fear the city may soon be flooded with more banners, unless strict enforcement follows the policy on paper.

GBA directed to re-inspect drains near 2 apartments

Times News Network

> In order to ensure that the arteries of these waterbodies are kept sacrosanct, the British excluded them from assessment and gave us a blueprint etched in stone so that they are maintained for posterity. We have to thank the British for the topographical survey and the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India, which they did on donkeys' backs using basic equipment, giving us a document that continues to be a beacon for survey and revenue administration for over 100 years. It is unfortunate that despite technological advancement, we are unable to conduct a second general survey in Karnataka
>
> **Justice R Nataraj** | KARNATAKA HC JUDGE

Bengaluru: The high court has directed the civic authorities to re-inspect lands in Gubbalala village of Bengaluru South taluk on Saturday, where two apartment complexes are situated, after an expert committee, constituted by the govt, reported encroachment of stormwater drains.

In his order, Justice R Nataraj said if the petitioners provide an alternative alignment for drains, the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) must examine it and ensure free flow of water into Subramanyapura lake, without disturbing adjacent landowners. Clarifying that if the petitioners fail to propose an alignment within 15 days from Feb 28, GBA must restore the drains as per the expert committee's report, the judge dismissed two petitions filed in 2014 and 2019.

The 2014 petition, by Mantri Tranquil Apartments Owners' Association, along with Mantri Developers Pvt Ltd, challenged a notice issued by the erstwhile BBMP in July that year. The accompanying petition by Royal Palms Residents' Welfare Association sought consideration of their 2019 representation and restraint on the civic body's part from demolition in the name of drain restoration.

BBMP argued that the high court had earlier ordered removal of encroachments over stormwater drains across the city and emphasised their importance in flood prevention. It submitted that the survey and expert committee report indicated encroachment of stormwater drains by both petitioners.

After perusing the materials on record, Justice Nataraj pointed out that four drains carried stormwater from the catchment area in Gubbalala village into Subramanyapura lake. The committee's map and the building plan filed by the petitioners showed that restoring the original SWD alignment through survey nos. 7 and 11 would have limited development on these properties. The report indicated that Mantri Tranquil pushed one drain to the edge of its property and blocked the second one. The court noted that former owners of survey no. 7 may also have altered the drain alignment in collusion with BDA officials.

The judge pointed out that Bengaluru's flooding issues were ignored for long, especially in low-lying areas, until an upscale locality was inundated. In this case, the judge said, multiple exercises confirmed encroachment, adding there was no need for the civic authority to consider the responses submitted by the petitioners.

EXAM SEASON KICKS OFF TODAY WITH II PU

The exam season in Karnataka begins Saturday with the commencement of II pre-university board exams. With centres prepared, invigilators deployed and guidelines tightened to ensure smooth conduct, authorities have put systems in place for a fair and secure process. Deployment of police personnel has been increased across the state to guard exam centres and maintain order, according to a press release issued by the DG&IGP's office.

Around 1,006 students might miss the exams because of attendance shortage. Karnataka School Examination and Assessment Board has lowered the minimum qualifying marks to 30 per cent this year. It has also cautioned students against fake question papers circulating on social media, warning of strict action against misinformation. For easy access to centres, the govt has announced free bus travel for students on producing their hall tickets.

Muthu P

Final preparations at an exam centre in Bengaluru Friday

MAIN EXAM: Feb 28 (Sat) to March 17 | **TIME:** 10am to 1pm

Repeaters **50,500** | Private candidates **13,000**

Total students registered **7.1 lakh**

Freshers **6.5 lakh**

2.9 lakh Science candidates | **2.1 lakh** Commerce | **1.4 lakh** Arts

- Registered colleges: **5,174**
- Exam centres: **1,217**
- Tentative results date: **April 7**
- Exam 2: **April 25 to May 9**
- Exam 2 results: **May 22**
- Today's exam: **Kannada, Arabic**

— Source: DPUE; figures rounded off | **Text by Syeda Tatheer Hussain**

Bizman held for getting pistol for 'protection'

Times News Network

Bengaluru: The Central Crime Branch (CCB) arrested a 26-year-old Jayanagar businessman, Syed Masood, for allegedly procuring a country-made pistol and 50 live rounds from a Bhopal-based courier, in what he claimed was an attempt to "protect himself" from the family of a woman he wanted to marry.

Cops said they are yet to verify the authenticity of his claims. Police commissioner Seemant Kumar Singh said a team of cops, led by DCP (crime) Raja Imam Kasim, arrested the two accused, including the courier, on a tip-off. "The courier, Javed Alam, 19, arrived at Yeshwantpur railway station from Bhopal on Feb 25 and met Masood at a pre-arranged place. Cops arrested Masood when he received the weapon from Alam for Rs 45,000, and seized the firearm and ammunition," Singh said.

During questioning, police discovered that Masood had no criminal record.

"As of now, both Masood and Alam are in judicial custody at Bengaluru Central Prison. Alam claims a senior associate in Bhopal gave him the pistol and asked him to deliver it to Masood for a commission of Rs 5,000," Singh added.

All for love?

Masood told police that he was in a relationship with a woman and intended to marry her. Her family opposed the relationship and arranged her marriage with a Dubai-based man. Masood's girlfriend told the man about their relationship, and he cancelled the proposal. "This is why her family is angry with me," Masood claimed.

"Whatever be the case, Masood's decision to procure an illegal weapon is wrong," a police officer said.

Kerala cops arrest peddler in city, seize MDMA pills

Bengaluru: The trend of police teams from neighbouring states raiding hideouts of alleged drug peddlers and busting narcotics rackets in the city and elsewhere in the state continues.

This time, Kerala police raided a house in Mylasandra, Electronics City, seized MDMA pills worth over Rs 1 crore, and arrested Diresh Kutum, a native of Assam. Working as a food-delivery agent, Kutum transported drugs from Assam and Kerala through Bengaluru, an investigating officer said. Police recovered 12 Cerelac packs in which the accused had concealed drugs.

According to a senior officer, Kerala police arrested Kutum's eight associates in Malappuram on charges of drug peddling. There, cops seized 1kg of MDMA. Based on their statements that Kutum had supplied the drugs to them, a police team landed in Bengaluru.

When asked why there was an increase in police from neighbouring states raiding places like Bengaluru and Mysuru and arresting drug peddlers, a senior IPS officer said, "Karnataka police also raid and arrest peddlers in other states. These raids and arrests are made based on credible information. It does not mean that our network is weak, but yes, there is an increase in drug trade all over." TNN

Defaulters clear ₹27L pending property tax

Times News Network

IN SOUTH CORPN

Bengaluru: As soon as Greater Bengaluru Authority's South city corporation announced an auction of defaulters' properties, as many as 14 property owners in Bommanahalli rushed to clear their long-pending dues Friday, resulting in the recovery of over Rs 27 lakh.

The fear of properties being sold through public auction appears to be prompting defaulters to settle arrears even before their properties are taken up for bidding.

This development comes after seven properties were successfully sold in a recent auction conducted by East and North city corporations. All five city corporations are proceeding with the auction of top tax defaulters as a last resort to recover pending taxes. This was the fourth auction this month, held in multiple locations, and GBA officials intend to continue with the auctioning of defaulter properties.

According to KN Ramesh, commissioner of South city corporation, the civic body had identified 50 residential and non-residential properties with total outstanding dues amounting to almost Rs 1.1 crore. Proclamation orders were served to all listed properties, and the auction was scheduled between 11am and 1.30pm on Friday.

Before the auction commenced, 14 property owners cleared their dues through challan and online payments. The commissioner directed the assistant revenue officers to issue official endorsements formally removing these properties from the auction list.

However, the remaining 36 defaulters did not clear their dues. Though the auction was formally called, no bidders came forward to pay the required deposit or place bids, leaving the process inconclusive. The commissioner said preparations are under way to conduct a re-auction of the remaining properties in the coming days.

Bids invited: BDA moves to lease out & revive Malleswaram Market Complex

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Muthu P

NEW & IMPROVED: The commercial facility comprises the lower and upper basement floors, the ground to fifth floors, and terrace

Bengaluru: The long-awaited Malleswaram Market Complex is set to move towards operationalisation, with Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) inviting bids to lease out commercial facilities within the redeveloped property.

As per the tender notification, the highest bidder will be granted rights to utilise the space for a range of activities including retail outlets, hotels, food courts, pubs and bars, gyms, office spaces and other commercial establishments. The move is expected to activate the complex and generate revenue.

The commercial facility comprises the lower and upper basement floors, the ground floor (excluding 192 shops earmarked for Greater Bengaluru Authority), the first to fifth floors, and terrace. Spread across about 6,522sqm (around 70,200sqft), the property has Sampige Road to its east, Scouts Ground to the west, 13th Cross Road to the north, and properties of Eshwari Seva Mandali and others to the south.

BDA has already committed to handing over 192 ground-floor shops to GBA for allotment to vendors who used to operate in the market. The remaining built-up area, including a proposed automated multi-level car parking facility, will be opened up for commercial development.

A BDA official said leasing space across multiple floors, apart from those reserved for flower, vegetable, and other vendors, will help the authority generate steady long-term revenue while ensuring proper maintenance of the building. "The highest bidder will be selected as concessionaire. The market complex is expected to become operational in the coming months," the official said.

The redevelopment project encountered challenges, including litigation, difficult geological conditions and waterlogging issues, which extended the timeline. "Now that the structure is ready, the process has begun to utilise the space for commercial activities and maintenance," he said.

Merchants and vendors, who have been operating out of temporary arrangements, expressed hope that the reopening would bring stability to their businesses, but had some reservations. Ramaiah, a vendor, said, "For over a decade, we've been running our business on the footpath. There is still no clarity on when the complex will reopen. Many are unhappy with the space provided inside; it is too narrow and lacks proper passages. BDA must put all arrangements in place before opening, or it will cause inconvenience to vendors and the public."

Land acquisition hurdles in state stall 5 new rail lines

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Bengaluru: Land acquisition bottlenecks have delayed five new railway lines in Karnataka, the Centre told Parliament recently, emphasising that progress hinges on support from the state govt.

In a written reply to a question by BJP's Govind Karjol in the Lok Sabha, railway minister Ashwini Vaishnav said the Whitefield-Kolar, Hassan-Belur, Shivamogga-Ranebennur, Belagavi-Dharwad and Shivamogga-Harihar projects are facing land acquisition.

Of the 1,945 hectares required for these five lines, only 226 hectares have been acquired so far, and that too for the Shivamogga-Ranebennur project. No land acquisition has taken place for the other four lines, he said.

However, in response to a query by **TOI**, the state infrastructure development department (IDD) said acquisition is progressing based on availability of funds. It said railways was told of local issues affecting the process.

On the Dharwad-Belagavi line, those owning 42 acres in Dharwad have disputed the acquisition process. Minister of state for railways V Somanna has instructed the railways department to "consider" a possible change in alignment.

For the Shivamogga-Ranebennur line, the state has approved acquisition of an additional 84 acres and is preparing for a 96-acre buyout, apart from 558 hectares already acquired. On the Hassan-Belur stretch, the state govt acknowledged delays but said it would complete the process to acquire 220 hectares soon.

Overall, Vaishnav said 3,357 hectares of land — 37% of the total 9,064 hectares required for railway projects in the state — are yet to be acquired. So far, 5,707 hectares have been acquired and handed over to railways.

"The govt of India is prepared to execute projects, but success depends on support of the govt of Karnataka," the railway minister said.

FUND CRUNCH?

Lines	KM	Land required*	Acquired*
Shivamogga-Rannebenur	96	559	226
Belagavi-Dharwad	73	581	0
Shivamogga-Harihar	79	488	0
Whitefield-Kolar	53	337	0
Hassan-Belur	32	206	0

Source: Govt of India | * in hectares

ANI

BURNING BRIGHT: CM Siddaramaiah and Priyank Kharge inaugurate the 7th edition of GAFX in Bengaluru on Friday

> Land acquisition issues are few, and we've been working to resolve them. We regularly review them with district deputy commissioners. For example, in the case of Dharwad-Belagavi rail line, there have been objections from some landowners who have sought a change in alignment. Even in complicated cases like this, we have been cooperating with railways department and getting work done
> **MB Patil** | MINISTER, INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

Relief for MLA as SC grants stay

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi/Bengaluru: In a relief for Congress legislator SN Subbareddy, the Supreme Court Friday stayed a Karnataka high court order setting aside his election from Bagepalli seat in Chikkaballapur district in the 2023 assembly polls.

POLL VIOLATION

The high court, in its Feb 16 judgment, had annulled his election on the ground that he had not fully disclosed details of assets and liabilities while filing his nomination papers.

Subbareddy appealed the decision in the apex court

Besides granting a stay, a bench comprising Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi issued notice to defeated BJP candidate C Muniraju, who had challenged Subbareddy's election in the high court.

The SC said Subbareddy will continue as MLA from Bagepalli for pending further proceedings.

DKS: Guarantee schemes a burden but will continue

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: Deputy chief minister DK Shivakumar said his govt's five guarantee schemes will continue without revision or review although they are a burden on the exchequer.

At a public event here Thursday, Shivakumar said welfare measures were aimed at strengthening families financially in difficult times. "Even if it's a strain on the govt, your (people's) financial strength should not suffer," he told the gathering.

However, he said irregularities in implementation of the schemes should be stopped, pointing out that many were drawing benefits in the names of "dead people".

Sources said the govt was exploring measures to rationalise the schemes and reduce expenditure. As a first step, they were planning smart cards for bus passengers. "This might reduce the number of passengers as 30% may not avail the smart card," an official said.

The transport department has sought 3,000 new buses, citing a rise in ridership following the launch of free travel for women. Officials expect chief minister Siddaramaiah to make an announcement in the March 6 budget.

There is immense pressure on Siddaramaiah to reduce the outlay for the guarantee schemes, with many legislators insisting that it leaves no room for infrastructure development work in their constituencies.

ANI

KUDOS: DCM DK Shivakumar fetes cabinet colleague Santosh Lad during an event in Bengaluru on Friday

Picture for representation

The Rs 156-cr, 28-acre project aims to rejuvenate the river besides building public recreational spaces, including walking tracks, fountains, yoga and gym centres, and an open-air theatre. The project was announced in 2024

Arkavathi riverfront project kicks off

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Bengaluru: The govt's Rs 156-crore Arkavathi riverfront development project took a huge step forward with Bengaluru South district administration set to acquire over 28 acres of riverside land in Ramanagara town.

The govt announced the project in 2024 and entrusted Cauvery Neeravari Nigam Ltd (CNNL) with the responsibility of riverbank development. CNNL prepared a detailed project report (DPR) and obtained approval from the water resources department.

The project aims to rejuvenate the river besides building public recreational spaces, including walking tracks, fountains, yoga and gym centres, and an open-air theatre. An underground drainage system is also planned to prevent sewage inflow into the river.

Based on DPR estimates, the administration issued a preliminary notification on Feb 21 to acquire 28 acres and 18 guntas in Ramanagara (14 acres and 10 guntas) and three adjacent villages, Ijoor (7 acres and 30 guntas), Jeegenahalli (3 acres and 10 guntas) and Cholappanahalli Amanikere (3 acres and 7 guntas).

The project will be implemented along a 2km stretch — from the old Bengaluru-Mysuru National Highway to a bridge behind Sai Baba temple. CNNL had already begun constructing large retaining walls on both sides of the river. Land up to 40 metres from the riverbank will be developed to encourage tourism and will include an open theatre for cultural activity.

Mohan MN, executive engineer, CNNL, said construction of retaining walls is likely to be completed by the end of this year. He said other components of the project would be taken up soon after the land acquisition process is completed.

"Preliminary notification for land acquisition was issued recently, and we will begin other work parallelly once the acquisition process is completed," Mohan said.

He said the project will play a key role in protecting the river ecosystem. He said the flow of sewage into the river would be completely stopped. "A separate sewage treatment plant will be constructed to treat wastewater and supply treated water to nearby townships," he said.

Yediyurappa, architect of BJP's southern breakthrough, turns 84

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: BS Yediyurappa, widely credited with spearheading BJP's rise to the top in south India, turned 84 Friday, marking five decades in public life. The party veteran remains a central figure in Karnataka politics and within the party's national structure.

Celebrations were held in his home town Shikaripura in Shivamogga, with a programme at Ekalavya Stadium, Kumadvathi College, attended by a host of state functionaries including Union minister Pralhad Joshi, MP Govind Karjol, former minister B Sreeramulu and MLC CT Ravi among others, besides seers from prominent mutts in central Karnataka.

Karjol said a state-level event to mark Yediyurappa's 50 years in politics would soon be held in Chitradurga after consultations with religious seers and associates are finalised.

Yediyurappa began his day with special prayers. He was present during a puja at his home and later visited the Hucchurayaswamy temple with family members, including sons BY Raghavendra, Shivamogga MP, and BY Vijayendra, president of Karnataka BJP.

Union minister HD Kumaraswamy of JD(S), BJP MP and former chief minister Basavaraj Bommai and others extended greetings.

TOI

PRAYERS FIRST: BS Yediyurappa, with sons BY Raghavendra and BY Vijayendra alongside him, offered puja at Huccharayaswamy temple in Shikaripura on Friday

SHORT TAKES

Siddaramaiah secure, says Ashoka

Opposition leader R Ashoka said chief minister Siddaramaiah is unlikely to step down, asserting that he has strengthened his hold within Congress and made any move to remove him extremely difficult. Taking a swipe at deputy CM DK Shivakumar, Ashoka said: "He should use his brains instead of relying on 'physical power' or pressure tactics to dethrone the CM." He said frequent dinner meetings among Congress members reflected internal discord and claimed the high command had failed to assert control or end infighting. Responding to JD(S) youth wing state president Nikhil Kumaraswamy's remarks projecting Union minister HD Kumaraswamy as the next CM, Ashoka said the NDA "dosti" would continue and talk of a CM face is premature.

BJP flags 'threat' to Mysore Silk

Leader of the Opposition R Ashoka Friday in Mysuru alleged Karnataka Silk Industries Corporation is being targeted through a proposed stadium on its land in T Narasipura, warning it could weaken or shut down the profit-making PSU. Joining protesting employees, he said nearly 2,000 workers across three units could be affected. Claiming he "smells a rat", Ashoka alleged six acres were being diverted under the guise of development to benefit private players. He said KSIC earned Rs 96 crore profit last year and announced a "Save Mysore Silk" campaign.

TOI

Vinay Kulkarni gets bail

New Delhi/Bengaluru: In a significant development in the decade-old Yogesh Gowda murder case, the Supreme Court on Friday granted bail to former minister and Congress MLA Vinay R Kulkarni. The decision, by a bench comprising Justices Sanjay Karol and AG Masih, offers Kulkarni major relief after a series of legal setbacks previously.

On Jan 27, the Karnataka high court had rejected his bail petition after the SC, in June 2025, cancelled bail on the ground that there were attempts to influence witnesses. This was after the SC had granted Kulkarni bail on Aug 13, 2021, on strict conditions, including restraining him from entering Dharwad district and directing him not to influence witnesses.

Gowda, a BJP zilla panchayat member, was allegedly murdered on June 15, 2016, in Dharwad. The case was handed over to the CBI on Sept 6, 2019 and Kulkarni was later arrayed as accused No 15 in the case. TNN

As bypolls near, Cong & BJP scramble for winnable faces

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Bengaluru: Governing Congress and principal opposition BJP are gearing up for bypolls to two assembly seats — Davanagere South and Bagalkot — with one seeking to consolidate its hold and the other determined to secure bragging rights. Elections to the two seats are expected to be announced alongside polls in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Assam and West Bengal.

DAVANAGERE SOUTH, BAGALKOT

Congress holds both seats and the governing party is treating the contests as a must-win, while BJP state president BY Vijayendra is keen to upset the apple cart and assert his leadership.

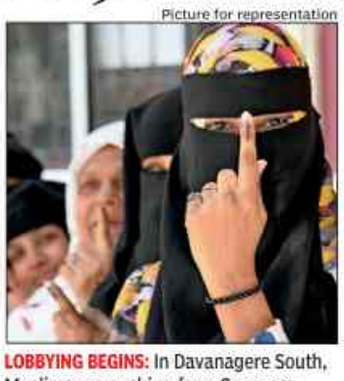
Congress plans to constitute two panels of ministers to oversee electioneering in the two constituencies, while BJP's state core committee has begun the process of shortlisting candidates.

"We'll assign responsibilities to ministers and they will work in two groups," said GC Chandrashekhar, Congress state working president. "Each team will comprise six ministers and they will initially shortlist candidates and later oversee electioneering, including campaigning."

CN Ashwath Narayan, MLA and BJP core committee member, said his party is already working on drawing up a shortlist of potential candidates. "Going by ground reports, we have a clear chance of winning both seats," he said. "We will send the shortlist well before the announcement of bypolls and the parliamentary board will finalise candidates."

In Davanagere South, Congress faces competing claims for the ticket. Muslims want a candidate from their community, while the family of late MLA Shamanur Shivashankarappa is seeking to field a member to fill the vacancy created by his death last Dec. Another section is pitching for a candidate from the Ahinda bloc (minorities, backward classes and Dalits), which together accounts for nearly 80% of the 2.3 lakh electorate.

Picture for representation



LOBBYING BEGINS: In Davanagere South, Muslims are pushing for a Congress candidate from their community

Unconditional support

Those backing an Ahinda candidate have flagged concentration of representation within the Shamanur family. Shivashankarappa's son SS Mallikarjun represents Davanagere North and is horticulture minister, while his wife Prabha Mallikarjun is Davanagere Lok Sabha MP.

"Shivashankarappa was MLA of Davanagere South for four successive terms, and Ahinda communities unconditionally supported him, respecting his seniority," said K Abdul Jabbar, Congress MLC. "Now, these communities are demanding they be given a chance. While Muslims deserve the ticket going by the numbers, we will be happy if a person from the Ahinda community is fielded as the Congress candidate."

Senior functionaries said options include fielding Mallikarjun's son Samarth Shamanur and Shivashankarappa's elder brother Bakkesh Shamanur.

Differing opinions

For BJP, the choice is between former MP GM Siddeshwara and BG Ajay Kumar, although Siddeshwara has ruled out his candidature. In Bagalkot, siblings Bayakka Meti and Mallikarjun Meti are competing for the seat vacated by their father HY Meti, who died in Nov last year. BJP is considering former MLA Veeranna Charantimath and MLC GH Poojar.

"There are differing opinions on candidates for both seats. Party brass will take a call after considering all opinions," said BJP's Jagadish Shettar, former chief minister and Belagavi MP.

Principal suspended after row with MLA

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Vedashree Nidya, incharge principal of Puttur Women's First Grade College, has been suspended after an altercation with Puttur MLA Ashok Kumar Rai during a recent student protest.

Students had staged the protest demanding facilities. Jabeen Taj GM, under-secretary to the govt (collegiate), higher education department, issued the suspension order Thursday, pending inquiry. The order stated the principal showed dereliction of duty by not raising students' problems to officials concerned and by failing to prevent the road blockade.

Vedashree has been suspended under Rule 10(1) of Karnataka Civil Service (Classification, Control and Appeal) Rules, 1957.

STUDENT PROTEST

After the Feb 16 protest, the department's joint director submitted a report based on discussions with the principal, staff and students.

The principal allegedly said the protest was to demand a new college building and that a memorandum had been submitted to the MLA.

Puttur Town police, in their report, said students blocked the road without permission, disrupting law and order. Citing intelligence inputs, the cops claimed Vedashree and Ivan Francis Lobo, college faculty, encouraged the students.

The under-secretary noted that health issues and other problems arising from the construction of a dialysis centre near the college were not brought to the notice of the MLA or departments concerned before the protest was staged.

Based on reports from the joint director, police and a letter from the MLA, the govt found prima facie that Vedashree had failed to flag students' problems and prevent the protest.

HC orders timely khata transfers, levies ₹500 fine on tahsildar

Bengaluru: The high court directed the revenue department's principal secretary to ensure notice boards in tahsildar offices across the state display details of pending and resolved applications, as required under Karnataka Sakaala Services Act, 2011, and to submit a compliance report within four weeks.

Justice R Devdas heard a petition by Annapurneshwari Builders and Developers Pvt Ltd, which alleged that the tahsildar of Bengaluru North taluk had failed to record the company's name in revenue records based on a registered sale deed, dated March 15, 2023, despite a representation submitted on Dec 2, 2025.

Referring to the Sakaala Act, the judge noted Section 9 allowed a Rs 500 penalty for not delivering services on time, along with Rs 20 per day thereafter. He pointed out that under Section 14, failure by designated officers to provide services could trigger disciplinary proceedings. Allowing the petition, the judge levied cost of Rs 500 on the tahsildar, payable to the petitioners. TNN

VB to M'luru faces technical issues in ghats section

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Bengaluru: Despite railway minister Ashwini Vaishnaw earlier this month stating that Vande Bharat trains can now run on Bengaluru-Mangaluru route, technical hurdles are delaying the train's clearance.

The Research Designs and Safety Organisation (RDSO) is yet to clear operation of the self-propelling train in Sakleshpur-Subrahmanya Road ghats section.

The railway board sanctioned introduction of electric traction between Sakleshpur and Subhramanya Road broad-gauge section for both goods and passenger trains on Feb 23. However, Vande Bharat trains — designed differently compared to other trains — did not get the go-ahead from the regulatory body due to their braking system.

According to South Western Railway, the terrain within the ghats is extremely complex, with no approach road to the track. It features 57 tunnels, 226 bridges and 108 sharp curves, and the railways took almost two years to electrify the stretch. Due to steep gradients (rise or fall of tracks), the 55-km stretch requires all trains to have an auto emergency brake (AEB). With this, the train's speed is limited to 30km/h and brakes are automatically applied if it moves faster.

Unlike other trains which run on external locomotives, the self-propelling Vande Bharat express rakes are not equipped with AEB systems. While SWR has approached RDSO for rolling out a scheme to provide AEBs for Vande Bharat trains, officials expect the process to take several months. "Once the scheme gets RDSO's nod with the AEB feature, Vande Bharat trains can be run on this section," a letter from the railway board accessed by **TOI** stated.

Due to this complexity, SWR is considering a temporary alternative of attaching additional locomotives to cover the ghats section. "There is no other option; this is a practical solution. We do this in the case of any loco or traction failure to clear the section," SWR's chief public relations officer Manjunath Kanamadi said.

However, rail experts and enthusiasts have criticised attaching additional locomotives to a futuristic train like Vande Bharat. "The railways should have planned and manufactured Vande Bharat rakes which are compatible with such steep ghat sections. The speciality of this train is its self-propelling system. Attaching and detaching locomotives itself will consume significant time for the railways," said Kaushik R, a rail enthusiast from south Karnataka.

TOI

ALTERNATIVE: SWR is considering a temporary move of attaching additional locomotives to cover the ghats section

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TIMES NATION

THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU | SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2026

CONG MP JAIRAM RAMESH ACCUSES MODI OF SHOWCASING 'FAKE OUTRAGE' OVER NCERT ROW

NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BJP, CONGRESS; MUSLIMS BEING TARGETED: OWAISI SLAMS GOVTS OVER DEMOLITIONS

Bengal's final electoral roll to be released online today

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Kolkata: Poll-bound West Bengal's final voters' list will be released online around noon on Saturday following the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, an exercise carried out over the last three-and-a-half months.

The final list will have all the 7.08 crore names that featured on the draft SIR list but around 66 lakh will be marked either "deleted" or "under adjudication". EC sources said close to six lakh names struck off during disposal of cases will be marked as "deleted" while over 60 lakh names will be marked as "under adjudication".

"The voters' list went to print this morning. It will be published online by noon tomorrow. Any elector can check his/her name by searching their EPIC number on the EC or CEO website and ECINET app. Physical lists will be available at the offices of BDO, SDO and DM/DEO," Bengal CEO Manoj Agarwal said on Friday.

SC raps Bengal govt for rushing to apex court daily against SIR

'Don't Delay Process With Vague Reasons'

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IN THE QUEUE

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Friday rapped the West Bengal govt for rushing to court every now and then with "vague and irrelevant" reasons to delay the completion of Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of state electoral rolls, to expedite which the SC has deployed judicial officers from Jharkhand and Odisha.

"Please do not come to the court with vague reasons and try to delay the process. Every day there cannot be an irrelevant reason here and there. There must be an end to it. We went beyond our mandate (by using exclusive powers under Article 142 to direct deployment of judicial officers to carry out a task which is essentially in the EC domain). You are making unnecessary complaints," CJI Surya Kant said.

The remark came after Kapil Sibal levelled the serious charge before the CJI and Justice Joymalya Bagchi that "strange things have happened. EC officials are giving training to judicial officers, who were deployed by the Calcutta HC CJ, on which documents submitted with claims of voters are to be accepted."

Sibal said it marked a violation of the SC's direction that the modalities would be decided by the chief justice of Calcutta high court. The bench then expressed its displeasure over SIR-related issues being brought up frequently by the West Bengal govt.

"When we said the HC CJ will decide the modalities, we meant he would decide which judicial officer is to be deployed where and what facilities were to be provided to him. The judicial officer alone will decide the pending claims and validity of documents submitted by the voters," said the bench, disagreeing with Sibal's charge about the EC disregarding the SC. Justice Bagchi said, "If the EC officials will not give training to judicial officers, who else will. Our order is as clear as daylight. We gave an alien responsibility to the judicial officers to expedite SIR. Both the state govt and EC must provide and create a congenial atmosphere for them to work." Finding the state at the receiving end, Sibal said the state chief secretary is here as her voting rights are being put to question by the EC. "Ask your chief secretary to work in tandem with the EC and judicial officers for expeditious completion of SIR," SC said.

The bench further said the exercise would be carried out strictly in accordance with the court's orders, which also specify which are the documents to be accepted for scrutiny of claims for inclusion of names in the voter list.

We'll fight EC's dirty game till end: Mahua

Kolkata: "We will fight EC's dirty game till the end," Trinamool MP Mahua Moitra said on Friday, hours after the party told SC that the Election Commission had asked judicial officers not to accept Aadhaar cards as valid identity proofs in "linkage cases". The MP said, "People should know what the EC is trying to do behind their back. We fought against this." Explaining what the party is opposing, Moitra said that all Bengal voters are aware that when the SIR draft list was published on Dec 16, 1.3 crore people who were mapped with the 2002 rolls were clubbed under logical discrepancy and harassed in the name of SIR hearings. TNN

E-way 'Hate graffiti': FIR after NHAI staff files complaint

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Meerut: After a complaint by an employee of National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), UP police on Friday registered an FIR against unidentified members of Hindu Raksha Dal for allegedly writing on a sound barrier of an elevated stretch of Delhi-Dehradun Expressway near Biharigarh in Saharanpur that the "road is not for Muslims".

SP Saharanpur, Sagar Jain, said, "Local residents informed Biharigarh police station about the graffiti on Friday morning. Officers immediately covered the message with black paint to prevent any unrest. A video is also circulating on social media in which a Hindu Raksha Dal member seemed to be taking responsibility for the act." Jain added: "An FIR was registered under BNS section 353 (2) against unknown persons. Investigations are on and we're trying to identify them." BNS section 353 (2) relates to "publishing, circulating false information, rumours or alarming news (including via electronic means) intended to promote enmity, hatred, or ill-will between different religious, racial, linguistic, or regional groups". In his complaint, NHAI official Sunil Kumar stated: "They used spray paint to write a controversial sentence against Muslims. And, hence, I being an employee of NHAI, filed an FIR against unidentified members belonging to the Hindu Raksha Dal." Kumar is a resident of Banjarewala village in Haridwar district.

In the purported video, some people, including a woman, could be seen raising religious slogans while standing next to the graffiti written both in Hindi and English. A car with Uttarakhand number plate could also be seen parked next to them. The outfit's Ghaziabad-based chief Pinky Chaudhary, confirmed that its members were involved in the objectionable act. "Our members were involved in painting the graffiti, and they rightly did so...," Chaudhary said.

Crushed by earthmover, King Cobra gets a lease of life

Shimla: Veterinarians in Himachal Pradesh's Una breathed new life into a king cobra that was grievously wounded after being run over by an earthmover.

The early onset of summer has increased snake sightings in residential areas. On Wednesday, a king cobra was slithering across a road in Malahat village when the earthmover crushed it. Locals saw it writhing in agony, its intestines spilling on the road, and alerted snake catcher Jitendra Kumar. He rescued the reptile and immediately transported it to the zonal veterinary hospital.

Dr Shilpa, a vet with 12 years of experience, took the king cobra in her care. The snake's injuries were extremely severe — classified as third-degree — since all its internal organs were exposed and had spilled out, she said. "Getting close enough to operate on a wounded snake, a king cobra at that, was the first challenge," she said.

"We cleaned the wounds, repositioned the organs and sutured them carefully," she said, adding the snake was out of danger. TNN

STATISTICS A slice of life in numbers

Bird-hit incidents clock steady rise

Bird-hit incidents in India have gone up in the last five years, with 2024 being the only exception as the number dropped slightly from the previous year. Airports are deploying bird detection and deterrence technologies to reduce aviation risks

We know where you live: Murder convicts to judge after sentence

Harveer Dabas | TNN

Bijnor: Moments after the Bijnor additional district and sessions court sentenced two men to life in prison in a murder case, the convicts sent out a chilling threat to the judge, telling him they knew where he lived and that they would kill him.

After the verdict on Thursday afternoon, the convicts, Jaideep Singh, 35, and Pintu Chauhan, 30, said in the courtroom that they would also not spare the 28-year-old daughter of the man they had murdered in May 2014. It was on the woman's complaint that an FIR against Singh and Chauhan had been filed.

After the atmosphere in the courtroom became tense, the court administration alerted police, senior police officers rushed and escorted the judge to his residence under heavy security. Additional police personnel were also deployed at his residence for his protection.

Jaideep Singh and Pintu Chauhan were found guilty of murdering Pukhraj Singh, 55, a resident of Matoora Durga village in Bijnor, over dowry-related dispute.

Pukhraj's daughter was married to Jaideep's brother, Pradeep Singh, and she allegedly faced harassment soon after her wedding. The original complaint said. It was alleged complaint said that her in-laws started demanding a car and cash as additional dowry. She then filed a complaint and against her in-laws and Pukhraj was pursuing his daughter's case. The additional district govt govt counsel Ajit Pawar said, "The victim's daughter filed a complaint on May 19, 2024, and alleged that that the two men dragged her father ontoto the road and crushed him with their car."

Kalapani dispute resurfaces as election issue in Nepal

Prem Punetha | TNN

Pithoragarh: The long-standing Kalapani territorial dispute has re-emerged as a prominent campaign issue in Nepal's parliamentary elections, particularly in the border constituency of Darchula, where major parties are sharpening their positions ahead of polling on March 5.

The issue had intensified after India inaugurated the 80-km-long Dharchula–Lipulekh road on May 8, 2020, prompting objections from Nepal, which claimed the road passed through its territory. In response, Nepal's parliament endorsed a new political map in July 2020, incorporating Kalapani, Lipulekh and Limpiyadhura – areas that lie in India's Pithoragarh district. The move strained bilateral ties between the two neighbouring countries, with the then-prime minister K P Sharma Oli accusing India of "creating a border dispute".

During campaigning, the Communist Party of Nepal (UML) has taken a hardline stance, pledging in its manifesto to "reclaim the disputed territories" and protect national sovereignty and territorial integrity. It attempted to resolve the border dispute with India by mentioning the Kalapani area.

At the local level, the UML candidate in Darchula released his manifesto, calling the fight to reclaim Kalapani, Lipulekh and Limpiyadhura a matter of national pride.

₹182cr cyberfraud: 3 managers of 2 private banks helped open mule accounts in their banks

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Rajkot: Three executives of two private sector banks circumvented rules to facilitate the opening of mule accounts that were used to launder nearly Rs 182 crores from cyberfrauds, police said.

On Friday, the Kutch East cybercrime police arrested the suspects, including two branch managers of one of India's leading banks, after their names were revealed during investigation into the racket busted last week. The arrested suspects are Chandan Pandya, Hitesh Kapta, and Yasin Sayecha, all tasked by their banks with opening new accounts, police said. Sagar Bagmar, SP of Kutch East, said: "These bank executives were in constant touch with four suspects we arrested earlier. We found chats between them and other members involved in the nationwide fraud."

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Scammers siphoned off money from bank accounts of victims in several states including WB, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Delhi, Haryana, UP, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Punjab, Bihar, and Telangana.

The executives, investigators said, were under pressure to meet targets for opening new accounts. The cybercriminals exploited this and offered commissions to them in exchange for opening "current accounts" with a lenient approach.

Investigators found that several current accounts were opened in the names of fake firms and shell companies. The three bank executives used identity documents of poor and less-educated villagers to open high-value accounts, obtain GST registrations, and rent shops to create an appearance of genuine business activity. The probe revealed that some of the accounts were frozen following complaints registered through cyber helplines in other states. The trio, though, helped the fraudsters unfreeze these accounts by pointing out procedural loopholes, allowing them to reuse the accounts for further cyberfraud, police said. So far, at least 74 cyberfraud complaints from different states were linked to the 81 accounts identified in the investigation, police said.

Three dead, two injured after vehicle falls into gorge in Shimla

Shimla: Two women and a man were killed while two others sustained injuries after a Bolero Camper they were travelling in plunged into a deep gorge in Shimla district on Friday, officials said. The accident took place at around 4 pm near Bahlidhar after the driver lost control. As a result, the vehicle plunged into a deep gorge, killing three of them on the spot. PTI

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विज्ञापन संख्या-01/2026, दिनांक-24.02.2026
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कुलसचिव

OPS joins DMK, says AIADMK has no future

Julie.Mariappan
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PTI

CM M K Stalin welcomed Panneerselvam into the DMK in Chennai on Friday

Chennai: Former AIADMK functionary O Panneerselvam (OPS) joined DMK, hailing Tamil Nadu CM MK Stalin as "Thalapathy" (a moniker meaning commander that DMK cadre uses to address him) "who is protecting the Dravidian race and ideology". AIADMK has no future, OPS said after signing the application for DMK membership.

TOI on Friday reported three-time former CM would be making the move after AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami (EPS) stonewalled all his attempts to re-enter the party. Tamil Nadu minister PK Sekarbabu accompanied OPS from a hotel to Anna Arivalayam, the DMK HQ, where Stalin and senior functionaries welcomed him. "I am joining DMK, the parent party, with immense joy, realising that Thalapathy leads the party and govt, taking people in the way shown by Anna and Kalaignar," OPS told reporters, referring to former CMs CN Annadurai and M Karunanidhi. "In the current political scenario, there is no one with the power to oppose DMK."

His son Ravindhranath and Usilampatti MLA P Ayyappan, along with their supporters, also joined DMK. Stalin embraced OPS and presented him a shawl in DMK's colours. OPS later visited the secretariat to submit his resignation as Bodinayakkanur MLA. Ayyappan also submitted his resignation.

Sources said Panneerselvam's decision to join DMK was finalised Thursday following an unsuccessful legal battle and repeated perceived slights from BJP and AIADMK. OPS replaced a photograph of former CM J Jayalalithaa in his car with one of Stalin.

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Modi and Shah must apologise to people of country, says Kejriwal

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New Delhi: Launching an attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi soon after being acquitted, Arvind Kejriwal demanded an apology from him, alleging that the so-called "liquor scam" meant to crush AAP was also the "biggest political conspiracy in independent India".

Kejriwal, who spent six months in jail in 2024 while serving as chief minister of Delhi, said the court "did not even find the case fit to proceed and ordered disciplinary action against CBI's investigating officer."

Earlier in the day, the AAP chief broke down before the media after the verdict, calling it a "triumph of truth," while his one-time deputy chief minister, Manish Sisodia, was seen consoling him. Kejriwal then arrived at his residence to an emotional welcome by his family members, including wife Sunita.

Later, addressing a press conference at AAP headquarters, Kejriwal said, "PM Modi and Amit Shah hatched a political conspiracy" to form a govt in Delhi, and demanded that they apologise to the country. "For the past four years, ED, CBI and other govt institutions were used to level an allegation called the 'liquor scam' against us. CBI and ED filed charge sheets in the matter. Today, the court said it is such a fake case that there is not a single piece of evidence or a single witness to even begin a trial with," Kejriwal said.

The controversy erupted in July 2022, months after the then AAP govt introduced a revamped excise policy that fully privatised retail liquor sales, claiming it would curb corruption and boost revenue. Delhi's LG recommended a probe into alleged irregularities in the policy, following which CBI registered a case and ED initiated a parallel money-laundering investigation.

Piyal Bhattacharjee

Arvind Kejriwal takes part in a roadshow after being discharged in the Delhi excise policy case on Friday

Five senior AAP politicians, including Kejriwal, Sisodia, Sanjay Singh and Vijay Nair, were at one point behind bars in connection with the case. Kejriwal spent six months in jail, while Sisodia was incarcerated for nearly two years.

Hitting out at BJP, Kejriwal said, "The public knows that Arvind Kejriwal is honest, so they attacked my honesty. After today's court order, it was proved before the country that Kejriwal is *kattar imaandar*. Today, a huge burden has been lifted from my heart."

Kejriwal dared the PM to call fresh assembly elections in the capital. "You sent five of our top people to jail... even after that you could not harm me. Now the only way left to deal with Arvind Kejriwal is to get him killed... PM Modi and Amit Shah's lust for power is the reason behind this conspiracy. Our family suffered a lot... the 3 crore people of Delhi suffered," he said.

ARVIND KEJRIWAL SAYS

For the past four years, ED, CBI and other institutions were used to level an allegation called the 'liquor scam' against us... Today, the court said it is such a fake case that there is not a single piece of evidence or a single witness to even begin a trial

"Go anywhere in Delhi today, the roads are broken. Medicines are no longer available in hospitals. Mohalla clinics are being shut down. Schools are in a bad condition. Pollution has reached levels never seen before. The Yamuna is in a terrible state. Tell me one thing BJP has improved in Delhi. They have ruined the entire city. The biggest price of their hunger for power was paid by the 3 crore people of Delhi. I challenge PM Modi, if you have courage, hold fresh elections in Delhi. If you win more than 10 seats, I will quit politics. The people of Delhi are fed up with you," Kejriwal said.

He said that AAP will file an application in court next week for discharge in connection with cases registered by ED. Kejriwal said the higher courts, including Supreme Court, will deliver justice the way the Delhi court did on Friday. "When there is no evidence and no witness, where will they get witnesses and evidence in the higher courts?" he said.

'Nothing More Than Speculative Construct'

Court Says Serious Allegations Must Be Supported By Admissible Material, Upholds 'Procedural Integrity Of Policy-Making Process'

▶Continued from P1

The prosecution projected Kejriwal as occupying the apex position and exercising overarching control over the alleged conspiracy in the policy's formulation and implementation, while Sisodia, as excise and finance minister, was said to be instrumental in shaping it. Durgesh Pathak and Vijay Nair were alleged to have worked in proximity to further the conspiracy, with Arjun Pandey described as closely associated with Nair.

Rejecting the allegations against Kejriwal outright, Judge Singh noted that his role featured only in the fourth supplementary chargesheet filed in July 2024 and that the principal material relied upon to implicate him was the statement of approver Magunta Sreenivasulu Reddy. Dismissing the claim that Kejriwal played a central conspiratorial role, the court stated, "Serious allegations must be supported by admissible material. In the absence of foundational material connecting Kejriwal with any criminal design, and in the absence of independent corroboration of the statements... the attribution of a central conspiratorial role cannot be sustained."

Even on Sisodia, the court found that the prosecution failed to establish even a prima facie case against him. He was arrested by CBI in Feb 2023 and later by ED in March, was accused of "recommending" and "taking decisions" regarding the policy "without the approval of any competent authority". "The attempt to connect Sisodia to the alleged money movement through another accused was based on inference rather than admissible proof," Judge Singh noted.

The judge further upheld "procedural integrity of the policy-making process", observing that the excise policy was formulated through consultations involving LG and the council of ministers, following constitutional procedures. The court held there was no admissible material demonstrating that Sisodia or Kejriwal exercised official authority with the intent to confer undue benefits or participate in a criminal conspiracy. "In the absence of a tainted policy or unlawful implementation, the prosecution theory is reduced to conjecture," it added, noting that private persons deriving commercial advantage from a policy validly framed and lawfully implemented, without any established violation of conditions or statutory prohibitions, could not be compelled to face criminal prosecution.

The court also scrutinised prosecution's overreliance on Magunta's statement, noting that the certain cases against the accused were built almost entirely on such statements without "any independent corroboration". Discharging primary accused Kuldeep Singh, an excise department official, the court rapped the investigating officer, saying, "there is no material at all. I am repeating, there is no material at all, and you have framed him as accused number 1."

Examining the broader conspiracy theory, the court said: "The alleged conspiracy, from its very inception, has progressively unravelled and, on close scrutiny, is revealed to be nothing more than a speculative construct resting on conjecture and surmise, devoid of any admissible evidence." The investigation failed to properly appreciate the evidence, rendering the prosecution case "legally infirm, unsustainable, and unfit to proceed any further in law".

Judge Singh also pulled up CBI for apparent "dilution" of the Indian Evidence Act, observing that "however elaborate the investigative exercise may be", the discipline of evidence can't be compromised. When tested on admissibility, relevance and probative value, the alleged conspiracy collapsed into a case based on inadmissible material and post-facto reconstruction. He further pointed to an "attempt to stitch together disparate fragments so as to create an impression of a vast and complex conspiracy", noting that the probe appeared to have followed a "premediated" trajectory to lend "an illusion of depth and credibility to an otherwise fragile narrative".

FROM JAIL TO BAIL — TO CLEAN CHIT

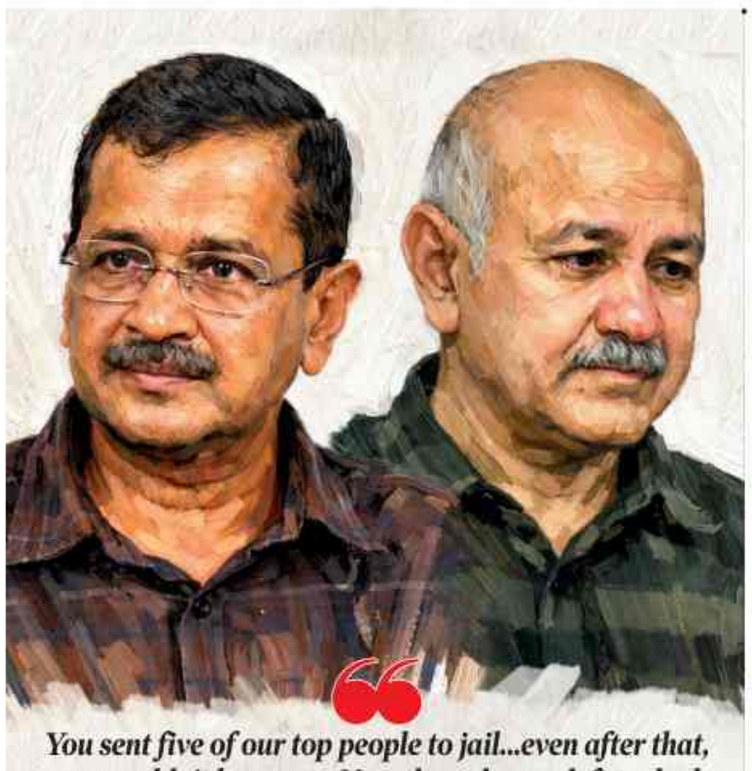
NOV 2021 | DELHI GOVT INTRODUCES NEW LIQUOR POLICY

THE POLICY, A QUICK RECAP

- Govt withdraws from the retail sale of liquor, allows private licensees to run stores
- The move, it is argued, will crack down on the liquor black market while increasing revenue for govt and also improve overall customer experience
- Liquor shops could stay open past midnight and offer discounts

THE CRITICISM

- Opposition BJP accuses AAP of allowing liquor shops to open in residential areas and promote a 'liquor culture' in the capital
- **'Gross violations'** in the new policy, including an illegal rebate of hundreds of crores in licence fees during the pandemic, are flagged, triggering investigations by ED and CBI



"You sent five of our top people to jail...even after that, you couldn't harm me. Now the only way left to deal with Kejriwal is to get him killed
—Arvind Kejriwal | Former CM

2022

July | LG VK Saxena recommends CBI probe into alleged irregularities in formulation, implementation of policy

Aug 17 | CBI registers a case against 15 accused, including the then deputy CM, Manish Sisodia

Aug 19 | CBI raids Sisodia's house

Sept 1 | Delhi govt scraps policy

Nov 14 | ED arrests Vijay Nair, former CEO of an events company, who was associated with AAP, and Hyderabad-based businessman Abhishek Boinpally

Nov 25 | CBI files chargesheet against seven accused in the case

2023

Feb 26 | CBI arrests Sisodia after interrogating him for eight hours

Feb 28 | Sisodia moves Supreme Court against his arrest, plea rejected; Sisodia and jailed minister Satyendar Jain resign from Delhi cabinet

March 9 | ED arrests Sisodia after grilling him for the second time

Oct 4 | ED conducts raids at MP Sanjay Singh's residence, takes him into custody

Nov 2 | ED sends first summons to Kejriwal in money laundering case

SUMMONS TO KEJRIWAL

First - Nov 2 | **Second** - Dec 21 | **Third** - Jan 3 | **Fourth** - Jan 18 | **Fifth** - Feb 2 | **Sixth** - Feb 19 | **Seventh** – Feb 26 | **Eighth** - March 4 | **Ninth** - Mar 21

2024

Feb 3 | ED files complaint against Kejriwal before magisterial court for skipping summonses

March 16 | Magisterial court grants bail to Kejriwal on ED's complaints against him for skipping summonses after he appears before it

March 21 | Delhi HC refuses to grant protection from arrest to Kejriwal on his petition challenging summonses issued to him. ED arrests Kejriwal shortly after

March 23 | Kejriwal moves Delhi HC challenging his arrest

April 1 | Special court sends Kejriwal to judicial custody in Tihar Jail

April 2 | Sanjay Singh gets bail from SC

April 9 | HC dismisses Kejriwal's petition against arrest by ED

April 10 | Kejriwal moves SC, challenging HC order upholding his arrest by ED. A Delhi court also dismisses his application to have five weekly meetings with his lawyers instead of two

April 22 | Delhi court denies Kejriwal's request for consultation with a private doctor through video conferencing

April 27 | Kejriwal tells SC that his 'illegal arrest' constitutes an unprecedented assault on tenets of democracy based on 'free and fair elections' and 'federalism'

April 29 | SC questions non-appearance of Kejriwal before ED despite repeated summonses for recording of statements, and asks if he can challenge arrest on grounds of non-recording of his version

May 10 | SC grants interim bail to Kejriwal till June 1 for LS polls, says he will have to surrender and go back to jail on June 2

June 2 | Kejriwal surrenders at Tihar Jail after the interim bail ended

June 20 | Kejriwal gets bail from a lower court in money laundering case; ED gets stay on his release

June 26 | CBI arrests him for alleged irregularities in formulation and implementation of excise policy

July 12 | SC grants him interim bail; Refers the legality and necessity of his arrest by ED to a larger bench

Aug 5 | Delhi High Court upholds the CBI's decision to arrest Kejriwal; directs him to approach the lower court for bail

Aug 9 | Manish Sisodia gets bail from Supreme Court

Aug 12 | Kejriwal challenges the Delhi HC's order in Supreme Court

Sept 5 | SC concludes hearing on the bail plea; reserves its decision

Sept 13 | SC grants bail to Kejriwal in the CBI case, says prolonged incarceration amounts to unjust deprivation of liberty

Sept 17 | Kejriwal resigns as chief minister, Atishi steps in

2026

Feb 12 | Rouse Avenue court reserves its order on charge

Feb 27 | Court discharges Arvind Kejriwal, Manish Sisodia and 21 others in the case

WHO ALL HAVE BEEN ACQUITTED?

Full list of 23 accused acquitted

Arvind Kejriwal
Manish Sisodia

K Kavitha
Vijay Nair
Kuldeep Singh
Narender Singh
Abhishek Boinpally
Arun Ramchandra Pillai
Mootha Goutam
Sameer Mahendru
Amandeep Singh Dhall
Arjun Pandey
Butchibabu Gorantla
Rakesh Joshi
Damodar Prasad Sharma
Prince Kumar
Chanpreet Singh Rayat
Arvind Kumar Singh
Durgesh Pathak
Amit Arora
Vinod Chauhan
Ashish Mathur
P Sarath Chandra Reddy

WHAT NEXT?

CBI has moved Delhi High Court to challenge the order. The petition may be heard today

Court recommends probe against CBI IO

Times News Network

New Delhi: Stating that "accountability needs to be fixed", the special court here on Friday recommended a departmental inquiry against the CBI's investigating officer (IO) while discharging all 23 accused in the liquor policy case.

Special Judge Jitendra Singh flagged the "glaring lapses" in the investigation and noted that the "duty of the court is not merely to discount the tainted investigative material, but also to recommend initiation of appropriate departmental proceedings against the erring investigating officer (IO) for framing accused 1 (Kuldeep Singh) as an accused".

Singh, an official of the excise department, was one of the persons discharged, along with former chief minister Arvind Kejriwal and deputy chief minister Sisodia, among others.

The court said the CBI's case stood exposed as "demonstrably erroneous, economically illiterate and legally unsustainable", and an inquiry was needed "so that accountability is fixed and the institutional credibility of the investigative machinery is preserved".

Rapping the conduct of the IO, the court said it was "constrained to observe that such a course of action reduces the investigative process to a self-serving exercise, where legal technicalities are invoked not to uncover the truth, but to shield investigative lapses and to construct a post-facto defence in the event that suppression or distortion of material facts is exposed during judicial scrutiny. Such conduct amounts to a conscious abuse of official position and strikes at the very core of the criminal justice system".

Within hours of trial court verdict, CBI moves HC

New Delhi: Hours after a trial court discharged Arvind Kejriwal, Manish Sisodia and others in the liquor policy case on Friday, CBI moved Delhi High Court challenging the order.

CBI has contended that several aspects of the investigation into the corruption charges against them were either ignored or not considered adequately by the trial court.

An agency spokesperson said, "CBI has decided to appeal against the judgement of the trial court immediately in the high court." The court may hear the petition on Saturday.

Following the verdict, CBI initially contemplated either filing a revision petition or challenging the order under Section 528 of Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, previously Section 482 of erstwhile CrPC, granting the high court inherent powers to prevent abuse of the court process, sources said. "Other available recourse was a special leave petition in Supreme Court, given it had last year ruled that the high court can stay a discharge order only in rare cases where the order looked 'perverse'," they added.

CBI, sources said, may also seek to expunge the remarks made in the order, including the departmental action recommended against the investigating officer. The federal agency has identified multiple points of contention, claiming that the special court had failed to consider specific merits of the case at the charge-framing stage.

It is likely to cite past court rulings and observations in the case, besides the report of Comptroller and Auditor General on the alleged irregularities in the policy rollout, and request to stay the discharge order. According to sources, the agency is likely to particularly cite the observations made by the court while rejecting the bail petitions of the accused and the fact that the court had taken due cognisance of CBI's chargesheet, implying a judicial agreement to the prima facie commission of a crime going by the evidence presented by the agency.

In Aug 2022, CBI had filed an FIR against the then deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia and others, including senior excise officials and 10 liquor licensees and their associates, on a reference from the Union home ministry over alleged irregularities in framing and implementation of the now-expunged excise policy. It had subsequently filed a chargesheet and supplementary reports.

Portraying verdict as a clean chit misleading: CM Rekha

Times News Network

New Delhi: Arvind Kejriwal is guilty before the people of Delhi, and the verdict of the trial court is not the final truth. chief minister Rekha Gupta said, adding, "The truth will ultimately prevail... Portraying this verdict as a clean chit is misleading the public."

Her party, BJP, criticised the court's decision as a "miscarriage of justice", highlighting critical past observations of various other courts, including Supreme Court, especially on the role of Manish Sisodia, one of the accused discharged on Friday.

The CM raised some questions, saying Delhiites deserve to know the answers. "If the liquor policy was so excellent and revenue-enhancing, why was it withdrawn as soon as the investigation began? Why did the wholesale profit margin increased from 5% to 12%, and who benefited from it? Why were changes made to the licensing structure that later raised serious concerns? Under what circumstances were these changes made, and who was the real beneficiary? The former chief minister (Kejriwal) must answer these questions," she said. Claiming that during the course of the investigation, it emerged that around 160 to 170 mobile phones had been changed over a period of approximately 200 days, she asked. "What was the need to change so many phones?"

Delhi CM Rekha Gupta

The CM said, "The court, in its order, referred to a lack of evidence. Insufficient evidence and being completely innocent are two different things. The legal process is not yet complete." Her govt has full respect for the judiciary and honours court decisions, she added.

BJP functionary Amit Malviya drew attention to the remarks different courts had made while denying bail to Sisodia — the then deputy chief minister was also in charge of the excise department when the controversial 2020-2021 liquor policy was rolled out before being junked in wake of a hail of corruption charges — to express "astonishment" at the latest turn in the case that has revived the opposition's allegation of misuse of probe agencies by the Centre.

"This order, in light of the record, so far, raises serious concerns... The legal battle is far from over, but for many citizens, this order raises troubling questions about accountability and justice in high public office," Malviya said.

As the length of the judgment, running into 598 pages, and its language became a topic of conversation in party circles, BJP spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi questioned the court's decision to discharge the accused for want of evidence when cognisance of the chargesheet against the accused had been taken earlier. "This is also true that hundreds of mobile phones and SIM cards — evidence in the case — were destroyed," he said, wondering if that might be the reason behind the lack of evidence. CBI will look into such technical issues, Trivedi said. He said that while CBI will decide on its next response, people have already given their verdict by defeating Kejriwal in the 2025 Delhi assembly elections.

Equally surprised, AAP begins to chart new strategy for Punjab

Mallica.Joshi@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: The court's decision discharging all accused in the Delhi excise policy case may mean different things for supporters and dectractors of AAP, but for the party brass, all assessments reach one conclusion — Punjab. Friday's order surprised AAP as much as it did BJP. Sources said all accused were expecting charges to be framed. "Not a single person expected the accused to be discharged, even before the trial started. Now that it has happened, the strategy for Punjab polls will be redrawn," a party functionary said.

The party's electoral strategy in the state that is expected to go to polls in a year so far has been to talk about work done in schools, hospitals and war on drugs. Anti-corruption and *kattar imandaari* are set to make a comeback in the AAP lexicon. The party is in office only in Punjab and holding on there is often linked by many to its survival.

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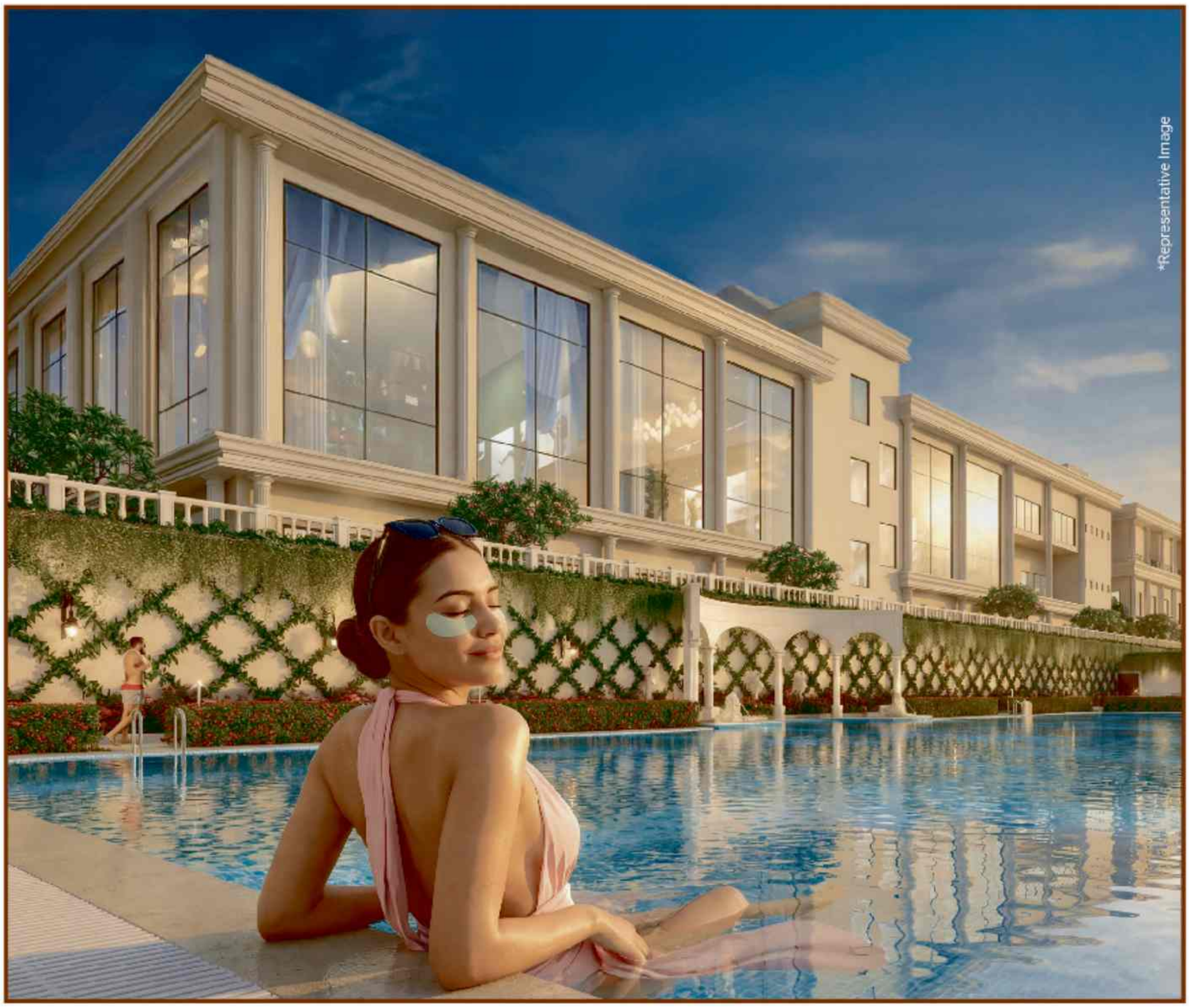

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A thought for today

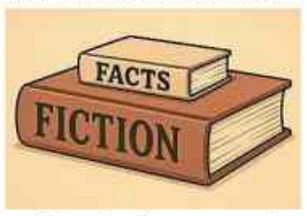
The greatest players use anger as fuel. Michael Jordan played every night with something like road rage

-JR MOEHRINGER

Elementary, Sleuths

Conjecture and stratagem no substitute for evidence

Special Judge Jitendra Singh punched so many holes in CBI's Delhi excise policy case on Friday that it ended up looking like a sieve. To an agency that SC described as "caged parrot" in 2013, Singh's remarks about a "premeditated and choreographed" probe may not matter much, but they should. Not because we say so, but because "in-depth investigation and successful prosecution" are part of its own mission statement. Yet, as the judge said, CBI built the Delhi excise case with "no material at all", "conjecture", "conscious and calculated stratagem", plus deeply problematic procedures. Most embarrassing is the court's recommendation of departmental inquiry against this case's investigators.



CBI disagrees, of course, and will appeal, and we may not have a "final" verdict for years. The 2G spectrum case from 2009 is still at the high court stage. But that's not the point. No society is above conspiracies, corruption and crime – look at America's Epstein storm. But then, Florida's Palm Beach police did a great job of investigating that case and collecting solid evidence. Yes, there was a huge cover-up later, but the investigation was unimpeachable. That's how lurid details of the high and mighty keep tumbling out. It's thanks to good sleuthing that US prosecutors achieve their high conviction rates – as high as 93% some years.

In India, cases tumble. Hardly one in five rape accused ends up behind bars; in murder cases the average is two in five. Why? Because evidence is weak. Last Dec, a drug runner was acquitted in Jharkhand because cops couldn't produce any evidence – rats had "consumed" 200kg of marijuana. This is where CBI can have a corrective influence, by setting high standards of investigation. Beyond CBI, the Delhi excise case is a lesson for prosecutors too. When evidence is flimsy, they should push back, instead of acting like the probe agency's assistant.

Walk, Don't Break

There are peaceable ways to manage rage

Rage is part of the human psyche. It's certainly a recurrent part of competitive sports, which funnel high emotions. So, a WTA tournament in Texas has unveiled a 'rage room' for players, where they can take out their frustrations, away from the cameras. Such rooms can be found in India too, where stressed citywallahs can "smash" their way to relaxation, for a pretty penny of course. Not that we didn't have a way to process rage till we got these rooms. Adrenaline, cortisol, elevated heart rate, tensed muscles – sure, these are preparing a body for physical action. But how about going for a walk or a run? Scrubbing floors, cold showers, pranayam…there are so many alternatives to breaking things.

There are schools of thought that esteem rage, as a catalyst for progress. But Indian philosophical traditions emphasise something else. Rage is seen as fundamentally a destroyer of discernment. In a famous analogy, it's like grasping a hot coal to throw at someone – you are harmed first. This is a fire to be respected, but not indulged. The goal is transformation, into purposeful, clear-eyed action. In tennis itself, Djokovic has famously collared emotional volatility through mindfulness training. Apropos Coco Gauff's racket-smashing, which seems to have resulted in the Texas rage room, it's true that there's gender asymmetry. Men's aggression is better tolerated. Still, the philosophers would say, as rage is not your enemy, so it should not be your master.

Why Lithium Is Not The Answer To Oil

Because we can't consume the earth to save it

mindfield
SHORT TAKES ON BIG IDEAS

Lithium came into existence minutes after the Big Bang. Stars still produce lithium. *How* it accumulates on earth, given that it's an unstable element always bound to another element, is not known. Mined for almost a century, lithium has been central to the promise of reducing fossil fuel consumption. For 70 years, two future techs, nuclear fusion and batteries, and promises of endless, cheap and clean energy have shaped its laws and policies.

It is through lithium's story, of exhaustive mining, that ***Javiera Barandiarán*** in ***Living Minerals: Nature, Trade, And Power In The Race for Lithium*** pushes for a move from the zero-sum "critical minerals" framework towards a Rights of Nature approach, for true sustainability.

EVs would be far better for climate if designed small and light. But EVs are designed large and heavy, requiring far more minerals, metals, and plastics than necessary for a functional car. In US, 80% of EV models are SUVs and large cars, in Europe and China, this is 60%. "Each large car carries minerals and metals that could have been left in the ground, foregoing the production of mining waste, use of water, and destruction of landscapes."

Market-driven resource nationalism mines everywhere: "underneath tropical forests and glaciers, in deep sea, in the Arctic and Antarctic, even on the Moon." Lithium is pivotal to resource nationalism. Because, first, it is hard to count, map and isolate. Second, this physical pliancy and promise of possibilities give it 'ontological' fluidity – the story shifts, but always is 'if we have lithium, we can…'.

This makes lithium resonate with aspirations for growth and wellbeing – mining memories that are "ideas of the past mobilised for action today in search of better futures." Through this, investors profit from electrification's promise of endless consumption and perpetual growth – not a formula for a livable planet. What is most scarce in "halls of power", argues the book, is not any mineral but imagination.

So, EVs are an improvement over diesel cars, but they remain too mineral-hungry, and too many are needed for the transition to qualify as truly sustainable. Smaller, lighter batteries could cut demand for lithium over a third. Add public transit and robust recycling, and lithium demand could be 92% below predicted levels.

Mining/extraction has divorced minerals from their ecosystems. Toxic harms of industrial mining are known. Yet there are still calls for "more science" to better understand mining's impacts. Science, as a privileged source of information, thus authority, is deeply ingrained in governance. Yet, the book argues, science itself is ruled by a "mechanistic view of the natural world where each element is treated as distinct and amenable to control and isolation". Research is by "industry-sponsored scientists to facilitate business as usual". Moreover, Francis Bacon and Robert Boyle's writings (16th/ 17th centuries) also created a "new image of nature as a female to be controlled and dissected". As a result, nature stands stripped of its complexity, rendering it "productive and ready for parceling".

Barandiarán concludes that depleting a mineral is as grave as causing the extinction of a species. If the "logic" remains "infinite growth on a finite planet", then changing the mineral (from carbon to lithium) only moves "sacrifice zones" from oil fields to salt flats. True transition isn't just about changing the fuel, but changing the logic of growth that demands we consume the earth to save it.

Good New Story, But...

Changes in GDP calculation methodology reinforce India's robust growth narrative. The one worry is white-collar job loss, like in IT, and its impact on consumption

Rajani Sinha

India's growth held up well in the middle of heightened global uncertainties last year, and now – with govt changing the base year for calculating GDP growth from 2011-12 to 2022-23 on Friday – the numbers are looking even better. GDP grew by 7.8% in Q3 FY26, following high growth of 8.4% in Q2. Moreover, GDP growth for the full year, per second advance estimates, has been revised upwards to 7.6%, from 7.4% in the first advance estimates.

Healthy GDP growth in the third quarter is on expected lines as the economy was bolstered by GST rate rationalisation. Lower income tax burden, benign inflation and lower interest rates were some of the other supportive factors. Other high-frequency economic indicators like IIP, auto sales, cement production and bank credit demand had also been reflecting the economy's improved momentum.

Corporate performance for Q3 has shown an improvement in sales and profitability, reflective of steady momentum in the economy. However, in the third quarter, the economy felt the brunt of higher US tariffs on India's exports. This would partially explain the moderation in growth in the quarter, compared with the second quarter. High growth in Q2 was also on a low base of 2024-25.

Besides bumping up growth numbers, India's new data series also incorporates technology-driven datasets and more surveys that will result in better coverage and capturing of the informal sector. These, and refinement in methodology, should take care of some of the shortcomings of the older GDP series that were highlighted by IMF.

Sectoral break-up of GDP data shows manufacturing growth of more than 13.3% in Q3 FY26. Per the new data series, manufacturing has seen double-digit growth for the last five quarters. This growth is quite high compared with growth measured by the earlier series, and can be attributed to the change in methodology and better coverage.

Services growth remained healthy at 9.5% in the third quarter, led by strong performance in sub-components like trade, hotels, transport and communication, and financial, real estate and professional services.

Given that consumption is the main driver of India's economy, it is heartening to note the strong improvement in private consumption. Consumption in the first three quarters of FY26 has grown by 8.6%, as against 5.8% growth recorded in FY25. Festive season in Q3 specifically saw strong growth supported by GST rate cuts.

Image: AI

Investment also increased by a healthy 7.8% in the third quarter. This could be reflective of a pickup in private capex or household capex (through real estate investment), as Centre's capex had contracted in this period compared with last year. In fact, Centre's capex growth appears to have shrunk in Q3 only due to last year's high base, otherwise public capex has been strong in the fiscal year so far.

Both central and aggregate state capex have grown by around 15% in the first three quarters of the current fiscal year, compared with last year. While Centre remains focused on capex, state capex has got a boost in the last few years from interest-free loans provided by Centre. CMIE data on investment projects announced and investment projects completed is also showing a jump in the current fiscal year.

With US imposing high tariffs on India from Sep 2025, growth in exports of goods and services moderated to 5.6% in Q3 FY26, compared with 10.2% in Q2. While India's goods exports have felt the heat of US tariffs, services exports have maintained healthy momentum aiding the current account balance.

Even in the midst of global trade uncertainties, we expect India's current account deficit to remain comfortable at around 1% of GDP in FY26 and FY27, assuming no sustained spike in global crude oil prices. However, weaker investor sentiment, leading to lower capital inflows both in terms of FDI and FII, is a cause for concern. This is putting pressure on the country's overall balance of payments.

While global uncertainties are likely to continue, India's trade deal with US and the recent US Supreme court ruling against tariffs will bring respite to the export sector. India has also recently signed bilateral trade deals with EU, another large trading partner, and smaller countries like Oman and New Zealand. Apart from supporting India's exports, these trade agreements will support global investor sentiment.

On the domestic front, continued push by Centre and state govts on capex bodes well for the future growth trajectory. Overall, we expect India's growth momentum to be maintained, with GDP growth of around 7.2% in FY27.

Apart from US trade-related uncertainties, we also need to remain watchful of geopolitical conflicts, like the recent US-Iran tensions and their impact on crude oil prices. On the domestic front, lower hiring by the IT sector in the midst of AI adoption is concerning. It will be critical to address concerns around household income and jobs to enable sustained consumption momentum.

The writer is chief economist, CareEdge Group

Is 'Manly' Still The Main Attraction?

Yes, for more than a few women. For them, overt masculinity signals confidence. But, guys, remember, that doesn't mean these women endorse outdated gender roles

Chitrangada Negi

What do many women want? Manly men. Yes, even now. More women than would admit it. Maybe the square jaw. Maybe the baritone voice. Or broad shoulders. The man who opens jars and doors. These women want men who radiate unapologetic, chest-forward masculinity – preferably with forearms that look like they wrestle bears recreationally.

The subject has launched a thousand podcasts, gym memberships, and heated comment sections. But first let's clarify: women are not a hive mind with a shared Google Doc titled 'Ideal Male Specifications'. Preferences vary wildly. Some swoon for lumberjacks. Others melt for poets who own more houseplants than socks. Still others want a man who can assemble IKEA furniture without entering a spiritual crisis. But bottomline: the fascination with overt masculinity persists.

It's true that the old roles have shifted. Men are not their dads and grandads. Anymore than women are their mums and grannies.

Evolutionary psychologists tell us that traits associated with strength and dominance once correlated with protection and resource acquisition. In prehistoric times, a man who could scare off predators and rival tribes probably had decent dating prospects. But we don't live in prehistoric times. Today, the closest most of us get to a predator is an aggressive email from accounting. Still, the wiring doesn't fully disappear just because we swapped spears for spreadsheets.

The confidence signalled by overt masculinity remains attractive. Sort of the way a steady Wi-Fi connection is attractive. It suggests reliability and less likelihood of random emotional buffering. A man who walks into a room like he belongs there can feel grounding. Not because he's flexing (though sometimes he is), but because decisiveness and calm authority can create a sense of psychological safety.

What's really interesting here is that, at core, this is not about physicality. A meathead who spends half his day in the gym will not serve. It takes quite a different cocktail of traits. Leadership. Emotional steadiness. The ability to take initiative. Emotional stability under pressure. These traits feel solid.

Attractiveness is also often about contrast, which feels compelling. If one person is emotionally expressive and intuitive, they may be drawn to someone more stoic and structured. Hello, complementary energy.

Pop culture is also catching up. Once, the heroes, no matter how exquisite their cheekbones, displayed one-dimensional masculinity. Today, the "internet daddy" is Pedro Pascal. Of course, he is a commanding figure, physically. But also, as one sharp fan has explained, "He takes care of Baby Yoda, protects Ellie in the midst of the apocalypse, he looks tired, but he always comes back to save you."

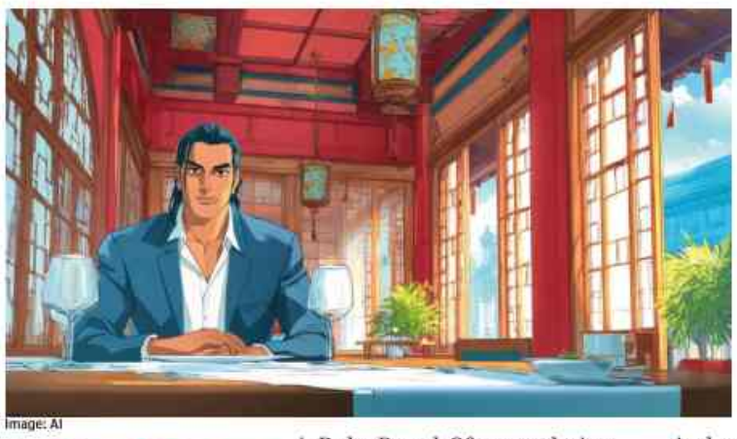


Image: AI

Of Life And Love
STORIES OF THE WAY WE ARE

Or there is the *Minnal Murali* superman. Tovino Thomas plays him as a very up-to-date masculine ideal – extraordinarily fit but also emotionally present. Alphaness brushed with warmth and humour.

In *Kohrra 2*, the character of ASI Garundi emerges very much out of Punjab's masculinity culture, physical and angry and scarred. Yet, when his wife leaves him, SI Dhanwant Kaur assures him: "I'm sure she'll come back. You're a good man and it's hard to let go of a good man." And Dhanwant should know, as many men as she is either taking on or carrying along every day.

The boy who speaks in monosyllables to his parents is not *natural*. He is the result of a long, excruciating process axing away the ability to form emotional connection and intimacy. He might spend a lifetime trying to run away from his vulnerability, but experts say that's like trying to outrun your rectum.

Building a life together means sharing bills, in-laws, and the last slice of pizza. What if the "strong and silent" man cannot discuss either mortgage rates or feelings? Then, even the girl who's grown up on a diet of romance novels full of billionaires who are emotionally unavailable but own helicopters, might wish she could be alone in a tower somewhere.

Indeed, many women who say they like "masculine men" often mean they like men who are decisive, protective in a healthy way, and comfortable in their own skin. They don't necessarily mean men who dominate every conversation like it's a competitive sport. Emotional intelligence, once seen as soft, is now widely viewed as magnetic. The man who can bench press and communicate his feelings? That's a plot twist worth investing in.

And we must remember: attraction is not a moral referendum. Wanting overt masculinity doesn't mean someone endorses outdated gender roles. There is also no single mould that guarantees universal appeal. The world is far too diverse for that. The man who thrives by leaning into his authentic strengths – whether that's stoic leadership or artistic sensitivity – will attract the people aligned with him.

In the end, overt masculinity isn't a universal key. It's one flavour in a vast buffet of human traits. Some will line up for it. Others will reach for something entirely different. And every Garundi sighing, "Women are usually complicated," has a Dhanwant retorting, "Men are no less!"

Calvin & Hobbes

Sacredspace

Every man takes care that his neighbour shall not cheat him. But a day comes when he begins to care that he does not cheat his neighbour. Then all goes well. He has changed his market cart into a chariot of the sun.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Daniken's Chariots: Driven By Gods Or Bards?

Vithal C Nadkarni

The celebrated American naturalist-cum-essayist Henry David Thoreau once confessed in his journals that he did 'not know where to find in any literature, whether ancient or modern, any adequate account of that Nature with which i am acquainted." Thoreau added candidly, though almost as an arguably subversive afterthought, that "mythology came nearest to it of any."

The toss-up, therefore, was between mythologies of dreamy-eyed bards and prophets and hard-core science as practised by boffins in white lab-coats. In his viral bestsellers, the Swiss author Erich von Daniken who died at 90, artfully opted for mythologies of extraterrestrial origin to account for the seemingly extraordinary attainments of our ancient civilisations.

In the process, he earned a cult following among paranormal enthusiasts around the globe even while being subjected to spiffy scorn from the scientific community. He used, for instance, the Delhi Iron Pillar in the Qutb Complex at Mehrauli to support his hypothesis of "an unknown alloy from antiquity staring us in the face". His contention of this being a shining example of 'Alien Tech' "resisting rust for 40 centuries" was treated as gospel by millions of his aficionados.

Predictably, there were howls of protest from metallurgists. They said the pillar was made only 16 centuries ago by hammering together 80 pounds of red-hot iron to weld them together into a single piece.

Experts also said ceremonial coatings of ghee in the first 500 years may have slowed down or even prevented corrosion considerably. But there were few buyers for such arguments possibly because the pillar *was* in a remarkably good condition. But the fact that the lower portion of the shaft was pitted by rust often got ignored or worse, dismissed outright as 'scientific nitpicking' against 'the glory or wonder that was India'.

More serendipitous or surreptitious (depending on your side) is Daniken's choice of the chariot as the lead or head metaphor for his bestseller. Known as *Ratha Kalpana*, the trope of horse-drawn chariot has been effectively used in Hindu scriptures to describe the relationship between the senses, mind, intellect and the Self.

THE SPEAKING TREE

The metaphor was first deployed in the Kathopanishad and is believed to have sparked similar narratives in Gita, Dhammapada and across the seas in Plato's Phaedrus. Yama, the Lord of Death, for instance, tells the ever-inquisitive boy Nachiketas in the Kathopanishad, "He who has the discriminative understanding of the driver, *vijnan-sarathi* and controls reins of the mind, manages to reach the end of journey, the supreme abode of all-pervading Vishnu."

The final verse of Gita is equally emphatic. "Wherever there is the Charioteer Supreme of Yog, Krishn, and his devotee, the ace archer Arjun, there is sri, prosperity, vijaya, victory, bhuti, glory, and dhruv niti, firm morality/righteousness.

However, can this be construed to mean that Daniken chose the chariot rather than the rocket for his heading due to Indic influences whether overtly or subliminally? The irony wouldn't be lost on the Swiss banker once jailed for fraud: for to do so would upturn his main thesis that we had visitors from outer space and it is these visitors — not earthly bards such as Vyasa, Vaisampayana or Sauti — who altered our intelligence and imagination through artificial mutation.

TIMES BUSINESS

THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU | SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2026

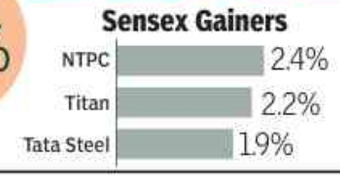
The Week That Was...

AI fears grip sensex, IT Index crashes 19.5% this month

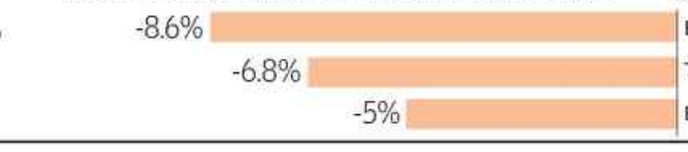
Sensex fell 1.8% and Nifty tumbled 1.5% as IT selloff over AI fears overshadowed improving corporate earnings. Sensex closed at 81,287. IT index dropped 19.5% in its worst month since the global financial crisis

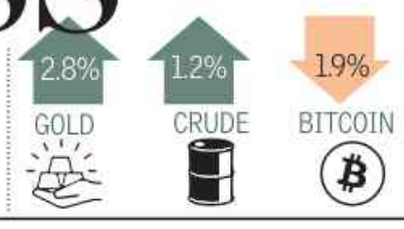
Sensex -1.8%

Sensex Gainers



Laggards





126%
Were the preliminary tariffs imposed on solar imports from India by US Department of Commerce

Source: screener.in, ETIG, Reuters

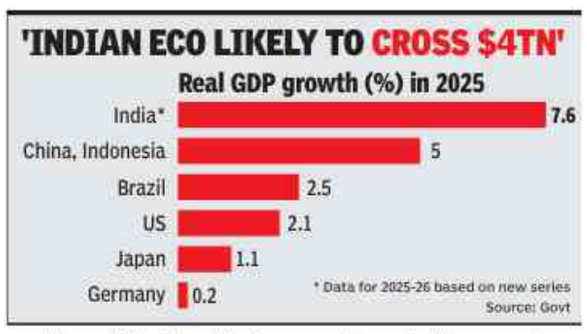
CEA raises growth forecast for '26-27 to 7.4% from 7.2%

Points To Policy Certainty, Improvement In Flow Of Capital

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Chief economic adviser **V Anantha Nageswaran** Friday raised the growth forecast for the next financial year to 7-7.4% as against 6.8-7.2% projected in last month's Economic Survey, banking on improved policy certainty due to trade agreements and an improvement in capital flows, along with high-frequency data pointing to sustained momentum in consumption and investment.

He said that the Indian economy was likely to cross $4 trillion next year. The CEA said that recent trends point to improved capital flows, especially when the handicap of India's low AI exposure is behind it. Govt's top economist also said that the recent trade agreements signed by India will help in the coming months, while also offering policy certainty.



"Because of global uncertainties related to capital flows, the exchange rate had a depreciating (effect) in 2025. With these trade agreements and the second mover advantage that India has in AI ecosystem...so all those things will improve capital flows, stabilise the exchange rates... which will then mean that the dollar value of the Indian GDP will reflect better the true underlying performance of the Indian economy in rupee terms in the years to come," Nageswaran said.

"We also have had the framework agreement with the US (in the meantime). Though the full effect of these trade deals may be felt in 2027-28, there will (still) be a positive impact in terms of capital formation in FY 2026-27, which will spill over into the consumption (as well)," he said. Citing multiple sets of numbers, he said the growth momentum was expected to sustain. "At the moment, the risk is on the upside in this range. Of course, global uncertainties are the downside risk factor to keep in mind."

Nageswaran stressed that the focus on policy and reforms, which are in "our control", have helped India be among the fastest growing G20 countries, paving the way for a "sustained non-inflationary growth of at least 7% in real terms", post Covid, despite the exchange rate not going in India's favour in 2025.

On the March quarter GDP growth, Nageswaran said, momentum in the economy is good enough to give a growth rate of 7.3% or more.

Fisc deficit at 4.5%

With revision in the GDP numbers in the latest estimate, the fiscal deficit for FY26 is pegged at 4.5% of GDP. This may require govt to squeeze spending in March, unless it can mop up more revenue, to meet the 4.4% fiscal deficit target.

Gold loans grow 128%, oustandings cross ₹4L cr

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Gold loans are booming. Lending against the yellow metal is expanding at triple-digit rates of 128% year-on-year, propelling personal loans, which in turn underpin the 14.4% overall growth in bank credit as of Jan 31.

Data from RBI on the sectoral deployment of bank credit shows personal loans outpacing all other segments. At 34.5%, they account for about a third of bank credit, followed by services, within which lending to NBFCs is the fastest-growing component. Industrial credit tells a different story. Loans to micro, small and medium enterprises are expanding briskly, while borrowing by large corporates remains subdued.

Outstanding loans against gold jewellery crossed Rs 4 lakh crore for the first time, reaching Rs 4,00,517 crore as of Jan 31. Gold loans account for 9% of incremental bank credit. Between Jan 26, 2024, and Jan 31, 2026, outstanding credit backed by gold jewellery rose by nearly Rs 3.1 lakh crore, an overall increase of about 338% over two years, expanding the portfolio more than fourfold.

Two factors explain the surge: The cost of gold has climbed by 152% in two years. In addition, a regulatory directive requires banks to classify loans secured by gold as gold loans.

Overall, non-food bank credit rose by 14.4% year on-year-as of Jan 31, 2026, compared with Jan 24, 2025. For the financial year to date since March 21, 2025, credit expanded by 12%, translating into incremental growth of Rs 21.8lakh crore in the non-food loan book.

Separate fortnightly data on deposits and credit show some moderation in early Feb.

Geopolitical tensions drag sensex 961 pts

Banks Lead Slide, FPIs Sell ₹10K Cr In Last Two Sessions

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Across the board selling pulled the sensex down by 961 points (1.2%) on Friday that closed at 81,287 points with banks leading the slide. Tariff uncertainty, foreign fund selling and no visible progress in Iran-US talks left investors jittery and pressing the sell button ahead of the weekend.

Foreign funds led the selling with a Rs 7,536 crore net outflow for the day. Combined with Thursday's Rs 2,429 crore net selling, the aggregate in just two sessions is close to Rs 10,000 crore. On the NSE, Nifty lost 318 points or 1.3% to close at 25,179 points.

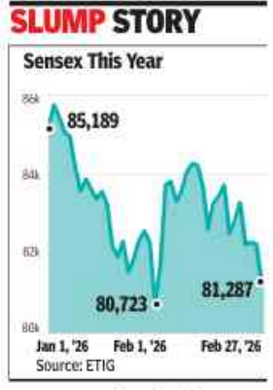
The day's slide in the market left investors poorer by Rs 5 lakh crore with BSE's market capitalisation now at 463.5 lakh crore.

According to Ajit Mishra, SVP - Research, Religare Broking, in Friday's market, selling was largely broad-based across sectors. "Investor sentiment weakened due to a combination of factors including inconsistent foreign flows, weak global cues and lingering geopolitical tensions. In addition, the underperformance of select heavyweights across sectors further intensified the decline."

Among the 30 sensex constituents, 25 closed in the red. ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank and Bharti Airtel contributed the most to the day's slide in the index.

In the broader market, the advance-decline ratio was not as skewed as in sensex. Compared to 2,633 stocks that declined, there were 1,574 that advanced, BSE data showed.

SLUMP STORY



SFB stocks fall on Bihar MFI bill move

Mumbai: Stocks of several small finance banks and finance companies closed lower after Bihar govt passed a bill that would restrict operational freedom of these entities, including capping lending rates and number of lenders individuals can borrow from. Utkarsh SFB closed 6.5% lower, L&T Fin fell 5.2%, while Suryoday SFB fell 4.6% TNN

Zomato's Goyal raises $54mn for new firm Temple

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: Zomato founder Deepinder Goyal's new venture, Temple, raised $54 million in its first funding round from friends, family and early-stage Zomato investors at a post-money valuation of about $190 million, the founder said in a post on X on Thursday.

The round came weeks after Goyal stepped down as CEO of Eternal, the parent of Zomato, moving into a vice chairman role and handing day-to-day operations to Albinder Singh Dhindsa. Goyal described the company as building "the ultimate wearable for elite performance athletes," without disclosing product launch timelines.

AT $190 MILLION VALUATION

Every investor in the round was either a founder friend or an early Zomato backer "who wanted in, whether or not Temple ever makes it to market," Goyal wrote. More than 30 Temple employees also invested at par value, using their own money without a discount. According to regulatory filings, the capital was raised from Peak XV Partners, Steadview Capital, Dharana Capital and Info Edge Ventures, along with over 80 individual investors. The backers include Cred founder Kunal Shah, Paytm's Vijay Shekhar Sharma, Zerodha's Nithin and Nikhil Kamath, Mamaearth's Varun Alagh, Cars24 CEO Vikram Chopra and podcaster Raj Shamani.

Revisions see improvement in health of mfg sector

▶ Continued from page 1

We have given more focus on having more granular data in this series. A base year revision exercise basically entails capturing structural changes in the economy more effectively, incorporating new data sources, use of better and improved methodologies, and aligning national accounts with international practices," said statistics secretary Saurabh Garg.

The Centre has undertaken a revamp of several datasets and an upgraded retail inflation data with a new base year of 2024 was released earlier, while the index of industrial production data set will also be upgraded with new data sources and a fresh base year of 2022-23.

The changes in the data sets include more information about the shifts in the economy and are expected to blunt criticism about the quality of the country's data.

The new numbers showed that GDP growth for 2023-24 has been revised to 7.2% under the new series from 9.2% in the old, while it has been upwardly revised to 7.1% for 2024-25 in the new series from 6.5% in the 2011-12 series. Similar revisions have been undertaken for quarterly growth numbers for April-June and July-Sept. The revisions showed a dramatic improvement in the health of the manufacturing sector, with economists saying that the old series may have underestimated the performance of the key sector.

"Manufacturing delivered an impressive 13.3% growth in Q3 FY2026, up from 10.8% in the same quarter last year, reflecting a strong rebound in industrial activity. While stronger manufacturing growth was expected, given the robust IIP performance during the quarter, the revised GDP series suggests that the sector has been performing even better than previously estimated," said Rumki Majumdar, economist at consulting firm Deloitte India.

Ringing in new series with new data points

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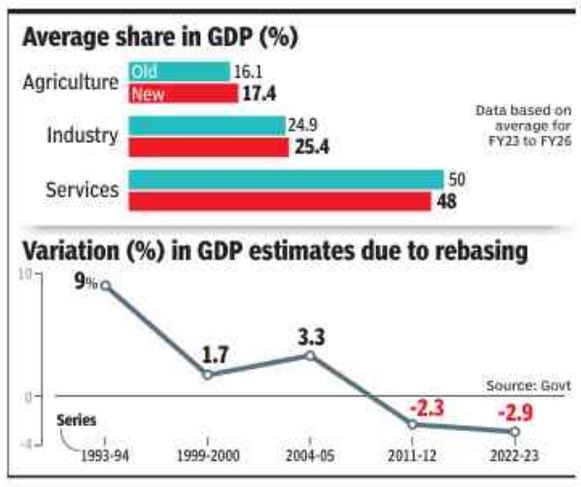

What is a base year? Why does it need to be revised periodically?

A base year serves as a fixed point in time against which changes in prices, quantities or other economic indicators are measured. It allows analysts to adjust nominal values to real values, removing the effect of inflation and enables comparison of growth over the years. It is revised periodically to ensure it accurately reflects the current structure of the economy and accounts for changes in the relative prices and output composition, as the parameters that constitute the calculation of these indicators become obsolete with time, rendering the inter-year comparisons pointless.

Which macro-economic indicators are getting a new base year?

The statistics ministry has already updated the base year for consumer price index (CPI), which is used to derive retail inflation, to 2024 from 2012. The gross domestic product (GDP), which is a measure of a country's broad economic size, is seeing its base year revised to FY2022-23 from FY2011-12. The index of industrial production (IIP), which measures industrial activity in the country, will see its base year revised to FY2022-23 on May 28.

What are some key changes in the new GDP series?

There is a shift from 'proxy-based' estimation to 'direct-data' integration, with the use of numerous alternative data sources. The previous series calculated Private Final Consumption Expenditure (PFCE), which is a measure of demand in the economy, as a ratio of how much of a product went to households versus businesses. The new series will compute demand directly using the consumption expenditure survey. To track the vast informal sector, the old series used the labour input method. The new series will use data from the Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises (ASUSE) and Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) to gauge their output and productivity. Recognising structural shifts in the economy, the new series will better capture sectors, such as digital economy (e-commerce, fintech, gig work) and renewable energy, which were negligible in the old series.

TOI Explains

What are some new and alternate data sources being used in the new GDP series?

High frequency administrative data like:

➤ GSTN data is used for state-level GVA allocation, cross-verifying corporate activity, and as a high-frequency indicator for trade, services.

➤ MCA-21 (Version 3), which is the most advanced version for all corporate and Limited Liability Partnership filings will be used to measure the private corporate tracking of govt expenditure at central and state levels.

➤ ESIC/EPFO payroll data to track formal employment and wages.

Data from household & enterprise surveys:

➤ Household Consumption Expenditure Survey 2022-2023.

➤ All-India Debt and Investment Survey 2019 for calculating interest rates and capital formation for the unincorporated sector.

➤ Periodic Labour Force Survey for annual, quarterly labour market data to refine income-approach estimates.

➤ Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises to directly measure the Gross Value Added (GVA) of small businesses and MSMEs.

What is a deflator and how has it changed?

Unlike CPI, which only tracks the price of goods and services households consume, the GDP deflator tracks the price of everything made in the country such as machines, construction and govt services. It is used to shrink the nominal GDP to find the real GDP. The new series will use a double deflator. So, the output and input values will be separately adjusted to calculate real value-added, helping prevent distortions caused by volatile raw material prices.

Dorsey's Block halves staff; shares up 16%

Shares of Block surged more than 16% on Friday after the fintech firm said it would nearly halve its workforce as part of an overhaul to embed artificial intelligence tools across operations.

The layoffs are among the clearest signs yet of how companies are navigating AI's impact, with chief executive Jack Dorsey warning that most firms were "late" in recognising the technology's potential. "At its core, it's about how some companies may be run going forward — not just doomsday headcount reductions, but also enabling higher ROI investments in growth and FCF," analysts at Evercore ISI wrote, referring to free cash flow.

Faster AI adoption is helping companies cut jobs in divisions most exposed to automation. Economists at Goldman Sachs estimate AI accounted for job losses amounting to a 5,000-10,000 drag on average monthly job growth in the most exposed industries in 2025. REUTERS

India's semicon dream faces 18-month reality check: Report

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Bengaluru: India's chipmaking push is entering a defining phase, with the next 18 months likely to determine whether policy momentum translates into commercial credibility, according to a report by Endiya Partners.

After three years of infrastructure build-out under the India Semiconductor Mission (ISM) 1.0, attention is shifting from headline announcements to on-ground execution. "Execution separates reality from narrative," the report said, describing a move from policy intent to operational outcomes.

Since Dec 2021, the country has mobilised Rs 1.6 lakh crore (about $18 billion) in private capital through ISM 1.0, backed by Rs 76,000 crore in state support. Ten cleared proposals span fabrication, compound semiconductor and OSAT units across six states.

The next phase signals a recalibration. The Union Budget 2026-27 set aside Rs 1,000 crore for capability building, shifting emphasis towards equipment, materials, intellectual property creation and supply-chain depth rather than just physical plants.

The report by Endiya Partners flags funding gaps, import dependence and talent shortages as key hurdles for India's semiconductor ambitions

"Fabs need more than construction budgets. They need equipment, materials, process know-how, specialised talent and domestic IP," the report noted. Currently, over 90% of chipmaking equipment and inputs are sourced from overseas. Domestic capabilities in analogue and mixed-signal design remain limited, and a gap of 10,000-13,000 skilled manufacturing professionals is projected by 2027.

Critical milestones loom. Commercial output is expected from the Dholera facility by Q4 this year. OSAT units must move from trial batches to scaled production, while 23 beneficiaries of the design-linked incentive scheme face pressure to convert prototype tape-outs into revenue streams. Capital inflows are improving but remain limited: startups in this segment raised roughly $50 million in 2025, compared with $28 million in 2024 and $5 million in 2023. Investors remain wary of long gestation periods and heavy capital requirements.

With the domestic market forecast to expand from $52 billion in 2024 to $103 billion by 2030 — fuelled by AI infrastructure, electric mobility and defence electronics — the report concluded that credibility will hinge not on more tape-outs but on sustained commercial uptake.

Dell rallies as AI revenue set to double

Shares of Dell Technologies jumped 17.5% on Friday after the company forecast that revenue from its AI server business will double in fiscal 2027, underscoring strong demand for artificial intelligence infrastructure.

Investors also cheered the PC maker's plan to raise cash dividends by 20% and launch an additional $10 billion share buyback programme. Dell's shares rose to a three-month high. Trading at $142.31, the stock was on track for its biggest one-day gain in nearly two years. Data centre equipment makers such as Dell have benefited from rapid AI-led investment, with sector leaders expected to spend at least $630 billion this year. Dell said it expects AI server revenue to rise 103% to about $50 billion in fiscal 2027. At least seven Wall Street brokerages raised price targets on the stock. Dell's ability to navigate cyclical challenges stems from its leadership in AI compute for Tier-2 cloud providers and enterprises, where revenue inflection provides greater flexibility in managing operating margins, analysts said in a note.

Dell's other major business, PC manufacturing, is grappling with higher memory chip costs as companies shift resources to building AI data centres. REUTERS

Make fresh investment, PM to industry

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: PM Narendra Modi on Friday asked industry to come up with fresh investment and innovation and also urged financial institutions to adopt innovative models to boost infrastructure funding, while strengthening project sanction and appraisal quality.

At a post-budget webinar, after listing out the steps taken by govt over the last decade on infrastructure, PM said: "The industry world will have to come forward with fresh investment and innovation. FIs and analysts will have to help in preparing practical solutions and strengthen market confidence. When govt, industry, and knowledge partners move forward together, then reforms turn into results." He urged stakeholders to take advantage of the new opportunities that were offered by the budget.

> "...Reforms should be evaluated not by announcement but by their impact on ground level. We must increase transparency, speed, and accountability by making extensive use of AI, blockchain, and data analytics, and along with this, we must also do continuous monitoring of impact through grievance redressal systems
>
> —NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

Modi said that govt has eased processes, developed tech-driven governance solutions and is pushing a wave of reforms. "To maintain this momentum, we have to focus not only on policy intent but also on delivery excellence. Reforms should be evaluated not by announcement but by their impact on the ground level.

"We must increase transparency, speed, and accountability by making extensive use of AI, blockchain, and data analytics, and along with this, we must also do continuous monitoring of impact through grievance redressal systems," he said. PM said that every budget is a step towards a bigger goal, which is to make the country developed. "Every Reform, every allocation, every change should be seen only as a part of this long journey." Seeking inputs on further measures, he said bond market reforms are required for long-term economic growth. "...we have to ensure predictability, deepen liquidity, bring new instruments, and manage risks effectively."

OpenAI raises $110bn at $840bn valuation

OpenAI said on Friday it is raising $110 billion in a funding round that would value the ChatGPT maker at $840 billion, underscoring the pace of spending in artificial intelligence.

SoftBank, Nvidia and Amazon back AI giant; AWS, Azure retain key cloud roles as OpenAI deepens Big Tech alliances ahead of planned IPO

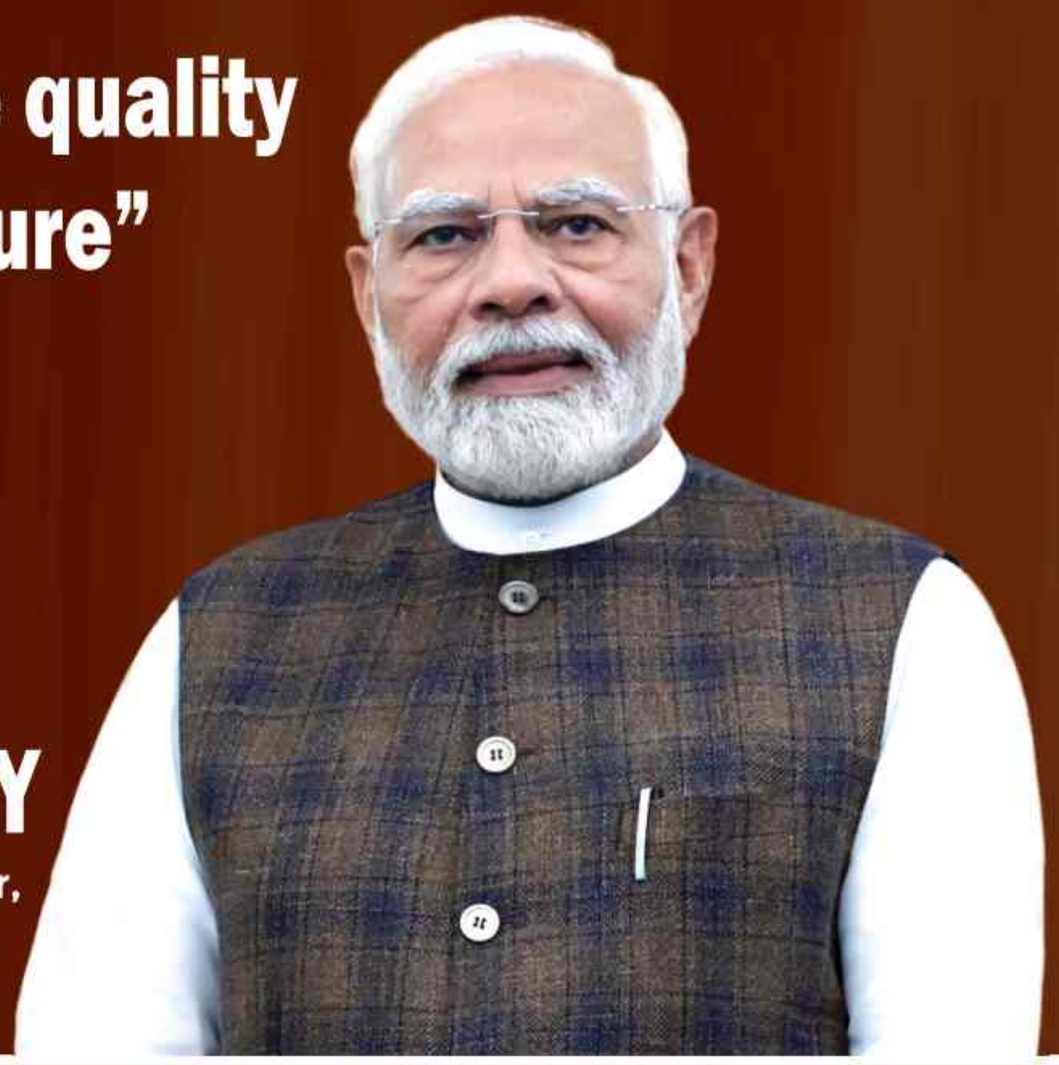
The round includes $30 billion from SoftBank, $30 billion from Nvidia and $50 billion from Amazon, and comes ahead of the AI startup's expected mega-IPO later this year. Big Tech companies and large investors such as SoftBank are racing to deepen ties with OpenAI, which is spending heavily on data centres, betting that closer partnerships will give them an edge in the AI race.

Amazon will begin with $15 billion, followed by another $35 billion in the coming months when certain conditions are met. Alongside the funding, OpenAI and Amazon have struck a deal under which OpenAI will use 2 gigawatts of computing capacity powered by Amazon's in-house Trainium chips, the companies said. Amazon Web Services (AWS) will be the exclusive third-party cloud provider for OpenAI Frontier, the ChatGPT maker's enterprise platform for building, deploying and managing AI agents.

The partnership does not change OpenAI's existing relationship with Microsoft. Microsoft Azure will remain the exclusive cloud provider for OpenAI's APIs. It was not immediately clear whether Nvidia's $30 billion commitment replaces an earlier pledge announced in Sept, under which it had said it would put up to $100 billion into the startup. REUTERS

CELEBRATING ONE YEAR OF IMPLEMENTATION OF QUALITY CONTROL ORDERS (QCOs) ON PLYWOOD & PANEL PRODUCTS

"Let us resolve to improve the quality of whatever we manufacture"



MAKE IN INDIA

ZERO DEFECT, ZERO EFFECT

INDIAN WOOD PANEL INDUSTRY

expresses its deepest gratitude to the Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, for inspiring the industry towards manufacturing quality products.

Federation of Indian Plywood & Panel Industry (FIPPI), along with its 20 regional associations, 10 lakh farmers, and 10 lakh carpenters & woodworking entrepreneurs, thanks the Hon'ble Minister of Commerce and Industry, Shri Piyush Goyal, for the implementation of QCOs on Plywood, MDF, Particle Board, and Wooden Flush Door Shutters. This visionary reform has brought the following transformations in the industry:

- Market is increasingly aware of the quality of plywood and panel products.
- Domestic production has risen 15%, driven by import substitution and increased consumer confidence.
- Compliance has significantly improved, with domestic licensed manufacturing units increasing from around 800 prior to implementation to over 2,400 currently.
- Quality improvement is becoming essential even for small manufacturers.
- Smaller factories are proactively exploring branding and market-positioning strategies.
- Driving the formalization of the previously fragmented sector, boosting government tax revenues.
- Through economies of scale, domestic manufacturers have absorbed rising input costs, ensuring price stability for consumers.
- Growing demand for standardized wood panels has enabled domestic producers to operate near installed capacity and has attracted over 3,600 crore in capacity expansion investments.
- Increased production supports agroforestry-based timber markets, boosting incomes for over 10 lakh farmers.
- Contributing to India's NDC goal of a 2.5–3 billion tonnes CO_2 carbon sink by 2030 through sustainable tree cultivation.
- Increased production is reinforcing employment generation across the sector, strengthening rural and semi-urban economic ecosystems.
- Directly supporting over 10 lakh carpenters and woodworking entrepreneurs registered under the PM Vishwakarma Scheme 2023, ensuring superior craftsmanship.
- Even Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) are partnering with local factories for consistent supply of quality panels instead of importing.
- Demand for E1 formaldehyde-compliant boards is growing steadily.
- Demand for quality control staff and job opportunities is rising across the sector.

FEDERATION OF INDIAN PLYWOOD AND PANEL INDUSTRY

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—Sanju Samson, ON OPENING WITH ABHISHEK

FINALLY, INDIA UNLOCK FEARLESS CODE

Top-Order Fires At The Right Time Against Zimbabwe Ahead Of Clash Vs West Indies At Eden

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@timesofindia.com

Chennai: It's finally firing just when it matters.

The Indian top-order, which left a lot to be desired until now, came into its own on a batting beauty at the MA Chidambaram Stadium against a pedestrian Zimbabwe attack on Thursday. With West Indies looming next at Eden Gardens on Sunday, there is bound to be a sense of relief in the camp.

To start with, Abhishek Sharma got going, and the recycled opening partnership with Sanju Samson smashed 48 off 22 balls, which set the tone for the massive total of 256 for 4.Abhishek, during the course of his 30-ball 55, got his runs at a strike rate of 183.3, but he seemed to cut down on his recklessness. The left-hander's bat swing is one of the best in the business, so it is not always necessary for him to try and generate extra power. On Thursday, he looked to time the ball more than strive for power and played the ball a lot straighter, making run-scoring look easy and relatively risk-free.

Explaining his unhurried approach, the southpaw said: "I just wanted to spend some time on the pitch. So far, I haven't batted 10-12 balls. I want to thank my team; they backed me and reminded me that my time will come," Abhishek said.

While Abhishek getting runs was a good sign before the must-win West Indies game, Sanju's 24-run cameo, too, came in for praise. Firstly, the left-right combination was a welcome shift, and Zimbabwe couldn't use one of their off-spinners right at the beginning of the Powerplay.

Tilak Varma, who had to come down to No 6 because Ishan Kishan took his place at No 3, felt Sanju's innings was important in India's batting resurgence. "It's important that openers give a good start; Nos 3, 4 and 5 can come out with confidence when it happens. Sanju did that brilliantly today, and it was followed by others," the southpaw said.

Tilak spoke about a change in approach by the batters ahead of the game that made a difference. According to the 23-year-old, it was coach Gautam Gambhir who sat with the batters and told them to go in with the mindset that helped them play so well in T20Is over the last year-and-a-half.

"We wanted to put fear in the mind of the opposition; we wanted them to realise that we're coming for them, even if we lost a wicket... Gautam sir reminded us of the brand of cricket we played last year and against New Zealand and South Africa prior to the World Cup. So, whatever the situation, as individuals, our plan was to go out there, smile and enjoy the game," Tilak said.

No. 6 is a position where Tilak hasn't batted too much recently. He always enjoys a little bit of time in the middle, but following an indifferent patch at No 3, the team wanted him to take up the finisher's role. More so, with Rinku Singh looking unlikely for the rest of the tournament following the death of his father.

> "I always say that whatever team needs, I am up for it. So I have done the same role (batting at No.5 or 6) for the last four years in IPL for Mumbai Indians, and in a few games for Indian team."
> —Tilak Varma

Tilak said he didn't mind it at all, because "it's all about the team's cause". "I played that role for India as well as Mumbai Indians a few times. So, I'm up for it. This game is about adjusting according to the situation... I was just waiting for one good innings, and it came at the right time. I am pretty confident going forward that I can win games for the team," Tilak said about his 16-ball 44.

Another player who batted with flourish was Hardik Pandya. His 23-ball 50 and economical three-over spell earned him the Player-of-The-Match award. "It was an innings where I had to reassess my style. Initially, I was trying to hit the ball too hard. Then I realised I could time the ball and did that. Now it's about keeping our skillset and putting our best foot forward," Pandya said.

C Suresh Kumar

Tilak Varma and Hardik Pandya added 84 runs in 31 balls for the fifth wicket and advertised the team's philosophy of playing all-out attacking cricket

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West Indies not a one-gear team: Arshdeep

Pacer Wants To Recover Well And Go All Guns Blazing In Virtual 'Quarterfinal'

Neha.Surana@timesofindia.com

PTI

SWING IS KING
ARSHDEEP IN T20 WC

Matches	19
Wickets	35
Bowling Average:	14.25
Economy Rate	7.33
Best Figures	4/9 (vs USA, 2024)

Chennai: There is an infectious aura around Arshdeep Singh. The left-arm pacer can be cut-throat with his yorkers and swing on the field, but off it, he is a ball of energy. Here in Chepauk on Thursday night, Arshdeep was in ominous touch, swinging the ball both ways and keeping Zimbabwe's batters on a tight leash. He picked up three wickets and went past Jasprit Bumrah to become India's leading wicket-taker in T20 World Cup history with 35 scalps.

And after helping India drub Zimbabwe, Arshdeep showed a different shade of himself from his menacing on-field persona at the media zone. Most of his replies were full of beans. One such reply came when he was asked about South Africa's win over West Indies earlier in the day, which had already eased India's path. Grinning, he offered a playful "thank you" to the Proteas and even shared how the tension had played out back in the hotel room.

"We weren't glued to the match but kept checking the scores here and there. My family was in the hotel room and when the West Indies batters were hitting, my dad was cursing them. I said, 'Don't get angry, just enjoy the match, and hope that South Africa win'. They (SA) played very well, thank you to them for giving us the chance to decide our result in the next match. It was fun to watch, and we'll try to beat them in the final," Arshdeep said.

> We weren't glued to the match but kept checking the scores. My family was in the hotel room and when the West Indies batters were hitting, my dad was cursing them. I said, 'don't get angry, just enjoy the match, and hope that South Africa win'.
> —Arshdeep Singh, INDIA PACER

India's next fixture against the West Indies at the Eden Gardens will be a virtual quarterfinal, and Arshdeep knows it won't be a straightforward affair. The Caribbean side's power-hitters can change the script in the blink of an eye and he was quick to point out that they are not merely one-dimensional. Windies, after all, clawed their way to a competitive total despite being down to 83-7 against South Africa on Thursday.

"It's not like they have only one gear. If you look at their game against SA, they played really nicely in the middle as well. They took the game deep and then made around 180 runs. So I guess they can also adapt according to the situation. Looking forward to the game, we'll see how the pitch plays and what the conditions are like. The focus right now is on recovery, and we'll assess things on game day," said Arshdeep.

One thing Arshdeep will be focused on against West Indies come Sunday is, in his own words, "trying to control the chull (urge) of bowling bad balls (laughs)".

And he went on to add that he and his fellow bowlers are happy to do the "dirty job" on batting-friendly surfaces. "As long as our batters are having fun batting on these surfaces, we're more than happy to do the dirty job. We don't mind being hit for runs. Our game plan has been to score big and then try to defend it," said the 27-year-old.

Pak chase survival, SL battle for pride

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Pakistan's T20 World Cup campaign has lurched between promise and peril, leaving skipper Salman Ali Agha staring at a qualification scenario that demands dominance and divine intervention.

A two-wicket defeat to England interspersed with a washed-out game against New Zealand in the Super 8s has reduced Pakistan to just a solitary point and a damaging net run rate (NRR) of -0.461. The math is brutal: beat Sri Lanka convincingly, now that their prayers of England beating New Zealand have been answered.

New Zealand's impressive NRR of 3.050 has dipped to 1.390 after the loss to England and they do not have any control over their destiny now. Pakistan controls little beyond their own performance. And even that has flickered. The batting has leaned heavily on Sahibzada Farhan's brilliance at the top of the order. He has notched up 283 runs at a strike-rate of over 158 with a century and two fifties.

Take that away and their cupboard looks bare. Shadab Khan, who has scored 111 runs, makes the second viable option for Pakistan, while Babar Azam, Saim Ayub and Agha have only flattered to deceive. Pakistan's hopes also rest on Fakhan Zaman to come good and perhaps on the collective rediscovery of their batting talents.

The bowling offers fragments of hope. Wily spinner Usman Tariq's 10 wickets have kept Pakistan competitive and Shaheen Afridi has hinted at mantling Ireland, Oman and Australia, only to unravel in the Super 8s with defeats to England and New Zealand. Their campaign has imploded under the most frustrating circumstances. Early wickets, feeble chases and bowlers unable to close games.

Opener Pathum Nissanka's earlier heroics now feel like echoes from a distant past.At Pallekele on Saturday, this game offers an interesting study in contrast. Pakistan are chasing survival, while Sri Lanka are playing for pride. One team needs to make a statement. The other seeks solace.

FACE-OFF
PAK vs SL
TV TIME: 7 PM
STAR SPORTS
JIOHOTSTAR

HEAD TO HEAD

PAK	SL
17	12

LAST FIVE MATCHES

PAK	L	NR	W	L	W
SL	L	L	L	W	W

VENUE: PALLEKELE

WEATHER 20°C

ODDS

PAK	SL
7/10	5/4

Eng beat NZ by 4 wkts to keep Pak hopes alive

Colombo: Already qualified for semifinals, England defeated New Zealand by four wickets to maintain a clean slate in the Super Eights stage and keep Pakistan's hopes alive in the T20 World Cup here on Friday thanks to Will Jacks's unbeaten 32 off 18 balls and a cameo from Rehan Ahmed who made an unbeaten 7-ball 19. Together they added 43 runs off 16 balls to turn the tide when all looked lost.

England have registered three wins in as many matches in the Super Eights. New Zealand are placed second in Group 2 with three points.

Pakistan are placed third with one point and they need to beat Sri Lanka by 64 runs or chase down whatever Sri Lanka score in 13.1 overs to dislodge New Zealand from the second spot and qualify for the semifinals.

Earlier, England's spinners showed their wares to limit a scratchy New Zealand to 159-7.

16 Overs bowled by England spinners are the most by them in a T20 International, eclipsing the 15.3 overs delivered by them vs Sri Lanka at Pallekele on Feb 3, 2026. England spinners claimed seven wickets in a T20 WC for the second time — the first instance such being vs Sri Lanka at Pallekele on Feb 22, 2026.

5 Single-digit dismissals recorded by Jos Buttler in a row— a dubious distinction achieved by him for the first time in T20Is. The sequence of scores being 3 vs Scotland, 3 vs Italy, 7 vs Sri Lanka, 2 vs Pakistan and 0 vs NZ.
—Stats: Rajesh Kumar

Opting to bat, the New Zealand innings lacked that one big knock that would have seen them post a better total in a game in which victory would secure their passage into the semifinals alongside England.

Glenn Phillips (39 off 28 balls), Tim Seifert (35 off 25 balls) and Finn Allen (29 off 19 balls) were the chief contributors for the Kiwis with the bat. Will Jacks (2/23), Adil Rashid (2/28) and Rehan Ahmed (2/28) were excellent with the ball for England, stifling the New Zealand batters in the middle overs after their pacers were smashed around.

Jofra Archer, who was spitting fire the other night against Pakistan, started with a maiden over that also included a New Zealand review after the on-field umpire adjudged Tim Seifert out caught behind following a loud appeal and a noise that probably came from the ball hitting the thigh pad.

TV replays, however, clearly showed that there was no edge and the decision was overturned.

Liam Dawson too kept Seifert and Finn Allen quiet in the first four deliveries of the second over until the former swept the left-arm spinner for a boundary through deep square-leg.At the other end, Archer seemed to be on song as he got the ball to swing, seam and bounce at great speed, but when he tried the slower ball, Finn clobbered it over mid-on for the game's first six.

Finn was beginning to look dangerous and against Dawson, he went down the ground and timed his shot to perfection to get another six.

Taking a cue from his partner's batting, Seifert too got into the act, and launched into Archer with a couple of fours and then pulled the England pace spearhead over mid-wicket for a six.

New Zealand have got the momentum now, forcing England captain Harry Brook to introduce Sam Curran into the attack from round the wicket. Finn welcomed Curran with a maximum over mid-wicket as New Zealand ended the powerplay at 54 for no loss. PTI

SCOREBOARD

New Zealand: Tim Seifert st Buttler b Rashid 35, Finn Allen c Bethell b Jacks 29, Rachin Ravindra c Bethell b Rehan Ahmed 11, Glenn Phillips b Jacks 39, Mark Chapman st Buttler b Rashid 15, Daryl Mitchell c Jacks b Dawson 3, Mitchell Santner not out 9, Cole McConchie b Rehan Ahmed 14, Matt Henry not out 1. **Extras: (LB-1, W-2) 3. Total: (For 7 wickets in 20 overs) 159. Fall-of-wickets:** 1-64, 2-66, 3-97, 4-123, 5-133, 6-135, 7-152. **Bowling:** Jofra Archer 3-1-24-0, Liam Dawson 4-0-32-1, Sam Curran 1-0-10-0, Adil Rashid 4-0-28-2, Will Jacks 4-0-23-2, Jacob Bethell 1-0-13-0, Rehan Ahmed 3-0-28-2.
England: Phil Salt c Seifert b Henry 2, Jos Buttler c Seifert b Ferguson 0, Harry Brook c Mitchell b Phillips 26, Jacob Bethell c Phillips b Ravindra 21, Tom Banton c Chapman b Ravindra 33, Sam Curran c Phillips b Ravindra 22, Will Jacks not out 32, Rehan Ahmed not out 19. Extras: (lb 3, w1). 4. **Total** (for six wickets, 19.3 overs). 161. **Fall-of-wickets:** 1-2, 2-2, 3-50, 4-58, 5-100, 6-117.
Bowling: Matt Henry 2.3-0-19-1, Lockie Ferguson 2-0-14-1, Mitchell Santner 4-0-29-0, Cole McConchie 1-0-13-0, Glenn Phillipps 4-0-43-1, Rachin Ravindra 4-0-19-3, Ish Sodhi 2-0-21-0.
Result: England won by four wickets.

Getty Images

Will Jacks picked up 2-23 and scored 32 not out in 18 balls to win his fourth player-of-the-match award and equal the record of Shane Watson which he achieved in 2012 in Sri Lanka.

Bennett doesn't see himself as an anchor

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Chennai: Shortly after his valiant unbeaten 97 against India in a losing cause on Thursday, Zimbabwe's top batter Brian Bennett had to calmly introduce himself — "I'm Brian Bennett". It was an oversight by a journalist who failed to recognize Zimbabwe's top batter, but he can't be blamed completely. The opener has largely flown under the radar despite his phenomenal debut World Cup run. Bennett has racked up 277 runs at a strike rate of 135.78, dismissed just once in five outings, and currently sits second on the tournament's batting charts.

In modern T20 cricket, where traditional anchors are increasingly rare, Bennett has quietly been playing the role for Zimbabwe with all the calm and cricketing brains it demands. Yet the 22-year-old begs to differ with the 'anchor' label.

"I wouldn't say it's too much of an anchor role. I just try to do the simple things better ... to give Zimbabwe a good start in the Power Play and then sort of just carry on that momentum throughout the middle periods with the likes of (Sikandar) Raza, the guys who can hit the big sixes. I do go out there and try to play positive cricket and play at a higher strike rate. Sri Lanka was a bit different. The pitches weren't as good as they are here. So maybe lower strike rate came into play."

He doesn't have the flash and flair of a power hitter, but that doesn't mean he is less effective. "I don't really do much power hitting. I think for me, as more of a stroke player, I try to get into good positions ... If I'm in a strong position and I can get my hands to the ball, I get the best chance to hit those sixes," said Bennett.

Earlier on Thursday at Chepauk, he exactly demonstrated the value of timing and positioning when he muscled the world's leading T20 bowler, Jasprit Bumrah over long-on to celebrate his third half-century in four World Cup innings in emphatic fashion. A shot that left everyone in awe. "I think Jasprit is always going to be a tough one to face. My thought process was just watch the ball as close as I can and just let my body do the actions. The ball was in my zone and I just hit it," Bennett said.

Bennett also showcased an array of eye-catching strokes, including a clever scoop, against India's decorated bowlers. "You practise those shots in the nets leading up to tournaments like this and the field normally tells you where the bowler is going to bowl. So the scoop was for pace-on yorkers. I thought that's a good option with fine leg and third man up. Yeah, and it's just literally keeping that clear mind," said Bennett.

Zimbabwe's breakthrough Super Eight will be remembered for many reasons, but above all, remember the name — Brian Bennett.

BRIAN BENNETT has scored 277 runs in five matches of the T20 World Cup for one dismissal

Sweet 16: West Indies banking on happy memories of Eden Gardens

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Kolkata: The West Indies will surely draw inspiration from their 2016 triumph when they take on India in the must-win Super Eights match at the Eden Gardens here on Sunday.

On April 3, 2016, they beat England at this venue to win the T20 World Cup. A decade later, they may not be the same force, but they had shown glimpses of brilliance before coming up against South Africa.

The common thread that remains between the team of 2016 and this one is Darren Sammy. The current West Indies coach was the captain then. "It's a special feeling for me," Sammy said on his return to the Eden. He might want to relive that moment of triumph, but India this time seem to be holding all the aces.

The team of 2016 had a lot of charismatic players. Apart from Sammy himself, there were Chris Gayle, Dwayne Bravo, Marlon Samuels. This time too they have some extremely talented players, who can deliver, like Shai Hope, Shimron Hetmyer, Jason Holder. However , they are nowhere near the class of 2016.

OH, KOLKATA: Daren Sammy with the 2016 T20 World Cup trophy

This West Indies did show their prowess in the league stage, but apart from England, their opponents were the associate nations who are yet to find a foothold in the game. Even England were well below par. The reality check came up against South Africa and there the West Indies came up short by miles.

The only advantage they have is that they have played two matches here during the tournament, whereas India are coming here for the first time. The last time India played here was the Test match against South Africa in Oct last year, and they were left second best. But then, white ball cricket is a different game and India are the masters in it. The wicket this time has a green tinge to it, unlike the dry surface for the South Africa Test.

Kolkata is as much India's home as Mumbai or Ahmedabad. With a packed crowd behind them, Suryakumar Yadav will have more adrenaline rushing through his veins than Sammy.

'MUSIC AND DANCE HAVE THE POWER TO TRANSFORM PEOPLE'

*Padma Subrahmanyam, who has completed 70 years in Bharatanatyam, says she may be among the few women who dared to say no to former chief minister and matinee idol M G Ramachandran when he wanted her to play his heroine in Kalki's 'Sivakamiyin Sabatham'. "Every day at 6am, he would call, asking for my nod. But I never said yes. My career was, and has always been, dance," says the 83-year-old in an interview with **Neeraja Ramesh**. Excerpts:*

TALKING TO TOI

■ You started teaching Bharatanatyam in your early teens. How did that happen?

My father, director K Subrahmanyam, who established Nrithyodaya in 1942, wanted me to give back to society what I had learned. I was 14 years old then. He took me to a dozen orphanages to select about 20 girls. Having hand-picked them, I realised how fortunate I was to have had the opportunity to impart the art. It made me understand that teaching was a learning experience.

■ Dance apart, you dreamed of becoming a doctor.

I wanted to be a surgeon. However, my father refused to get me the application form, feeling medicine was not my true path. I approached our family friend, C Subramaniam, who had served as the education minister and later as the governor of Maharashtra, hoping he would support me. Instead, he helped me recognise my real calling. He told me that while there were many competent doctors, what the country needed were dedicated dancers. In time, I did earn a doctorate in dance. I spent 10 years studying commentaries, temple inscriptions, sculptures, and difficult classical texts.

■ Was it difficult to say no to MGR?

He was persistent. He wanted me to act in his film 'Sivakamiyin Sabatham' as his leading lady, but I had no interest in movies. The project was shelved after I explained to him that dance was my calling. It wasn't the only film offer I said no to. Satyajit Ray, Hrishikesh Mukherjee, Raj Kapoor and N T Rama Rao had also approached me, but I declined their offers. Despite my father introducing actors such as T R Rajakumari, Saroja Devi and M K Thyagaraja Bhagavathar, and my mother, Meenakshi Subrahmanyam, being a composer and lyricist, I was not drawn to films.

■ Your thesis was on karanas in Indian dance and sculpture.

I did my PhD at Annamalai University. My idea was to create a link between the forgotten past and the theoretical and practical aspects of dance.

■ Are you a strict teacher?

I have been teaching dance since 1958. I learn from my students, and I know how to correct their mistakes. In class, I mean business and am strict about punctuality and attendance. But outside the class, I play games with them.

I encourage students to watch artists of all genres. Broad-mindedness is something my father inculcated in me from childhood. I enjoy good dance in films too. I love art in any form.

■ In 2010, you choreographed a historic performance with 1,000 dancers at Brihadeeswara Temple in Thanjavur.

It was the temple's 1,000th anniversary, and I wanted to celebrate Lord Shiva. I started planning an event, 'Rajarajeswaram 1,000', within a short time. It was executed with the help of my dance fraternity, 'ABHAI', the Association of Bharatanatyam Artists of India. All of us chose one student from their school, recorded our pieces and sent them across the globe. Former chief minister M Karunanidhi volunteered to be part of it, making food arrangements for all participants when he learned about the event. In fact, he asked if he could participate, and we performed without rehearsals.

■ Did you wear the salangai (ankle bells) of actor Padmini for your arangetram?

Yes, our family association with them dates back several decades. I was born when the sisters (Lalitha, Padmini and Ragini) were living in our house. My father was called 'appa' in the film industry. Our house was like a 'chatram', an abode for many. From Janaki Ramachandran to Padmini's family, many lived with us at one point. When I was ready for my arangetram, it was Padmini's mother who tied the salangai around my ankles. I am truly blessed.

■ Your designs for the temple at Satara are much talked about.

I designed the sculptures of the 108 karanas (dance movements) of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati in black granite for the Nataraja temple at Satara, Maharashtra, at Kanchi Mahaswami's bidding.

I was asked to freeze the movements of the karanas, which are not sculpted in the older temples of Tanjore or Chidambaram. I used the twin figures of Shiva and Parvati to bring out the animation in each movement. Twelve years after completing the design of these 108 karana figures, I discovered, by the grace of the Kanchi seer, about 50 karana sculptures in the world-renowned 9th-century AD temple complex at Prambanan in Central Java, Indonesia.

■ In the course of your research and performances, did you find any connections between India and cultures abroad?

Every time I travel abroad, I inform the Kancheepuram seer. In 1982, before my visit to Australia, he casually told me to visit the Aborigines there. To my surprise, a group referred to as the 'Shiva tribe' performed at a festival, singing "Rama Rama".

They held a trishul and applied sacred ash on their bodies. As soon as they wrapped up their performance, I went up to them and started speaking in Tamil. We discovered that we had nearly 50 words in common, including "muzham" (cubit) and "mutti" (knee joint).

Pic: R Ramesh Shankar

TEXTS, TRADITION, TECHNIQUE

- The dancer scores the music for most of her productions, apart from numerous individual compositions
- She was the first dancer to use a Meera bhajan, scoring it to suit the grammar of a pada varnam
- She has also composed the first Bengali varnam, set to lyrics by Salil Chowdhury
- Her creativity as a dancer and choreographer includes an expanding technique through the use of the entire body, with leaps, extended leg movements, and fast footwork to enhance rhythmic variations
- Her reconstruction of the karanas has revealed that Bharata Muni's Natyasastra has been a common text for performing arts across India and in many parts of Southeast Asia

THE DACOIT WHO TURNED OUT TO BE A FAN

Several years ago, in Khajuraho, I was walking towards my performance venue when a well-built man with a large moustache picked up my vanity case, which contained my jewels. He then walked with my troupe and me to the tent. He casually spoke about a lecture in Ujjain that had been held only for a select group of scholars, so I assumed he was a regular visitor.

When I asked him more about himself, he calmly declared that he was a 'dakoo' (dacoit) and a big fan of mine. He said that when he saw me dance, he saw Goddess Durga. He also said that he had impressed Pandit Ravi Shankar, who had conferred on him the title 'Rasika Shiromani'.

That moment stayed with me. I believe that good music and dance have the power to transform people.

Edu loans dip in Guj as more foreign aspirants choose EU over US

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Low-cost education was a major factor, but it was not just about fees. The EU offers stronger labour protections and a more stable living environment in the long run, says Rahul Paida pursuing an MS in Germany

Ahmedabad: A pivot from the US and Canada towards Europe by a rising number of Gujarat's foreign education aspirants is reflected in declining education loan disbursals over the past two years. Data from the 188th State Level Bankers' Committee (SLBC) Gujarat report show that education loan disbursals have consistently declined from a peak of Rs 595 crore in the Dec 2023 quarter to Rs 459 crore in the corresponding 2024 quarter to a low of Rs 377 crore in 2025.

Bankers and foreign education consultants say fewer loan disbursals could be a function of changing preferences among foreign education aspirants.

While the US and Canada once accounted for nearly 60% of Gujarati students heading abroad, tighter visa regimes, uncertainty over post-study work opportunities and rising costs have led to students either putting their foreign education plans on hold or veering towards Europe and other destinations where the cost of education is comparatively cheaper.

"The cost of foreign education in European countries, particularly UK and Germany, is much lower. Against an average annual education cost of Rs 23 lakh in American and Canadian universities, studying at European universities would cost anywhere between Rs 3 lakh and Rs 15 lakh. While the overall number of candidates going to study abroad has declined 50-60%, the share of those headed to US and Canada has also fallen," said Bhavin Thaker, an Ahmedabad-based foreign education consultant.

The SLBC reports states that the number of fresh loan accounts has also dropped sharply from 6,505 in Dec 2023 to 3,481 in Dec 2024, before seeing a modest recovery to 4,081 in Dec 2025 – still well below the 2023 high.

"My sister is currently studying in the US and her annual fees and living expenses come to nearly Rs 50 lakh. With the recent anti-immigration policies and uncertainty in Canada as well, I didn't find those destinations very inviting," said Khushi Patel, an Ahmedabad-based student who has secured admission for a bachelor's in international business in Germany.

"I began exploring alternatives and realised Germany makes far more sense financially, besides offering strong career opportunities. My annual expense will be around Rs 3.5 lakh," she added.

HC okays BJP 'Parivartan Yatra' in Bengal, with riders

Subrata Chattoraj | TNN

Kolkata: Calcutta high court Friday allowed BJP to hold its "Parivartan Yatra" in West Bengal on March 1 and 2 but said the organisers must ensure no provocative speeches are made during the yatra and the crowd does not exceed 1,000.

The state govt had earlier refused permission for the yatra on the two dates on grounds that it would be difficult to provide adequate security amid the ongoing special intensive revision (SIR) of voter rolls.

Justice Suvra Ghosh allowed meetings to be held between 2pm and 6pm across nine locations. In tandem with guidelines issued for other public meetings and rallies, the HC directed the state govt to ensure adequate deployment of police personnel.

Dismissing the state's argument on the dearth of police personnel due to SIR, Justice Ghosh observed that political rallies were held by the governing dispensation even after SIR began.

The court told organisers that no public property should be vandalised or any cops harmed. It also asked them to ensure the sound system should not violate pollution control board guidelines.

BJP's "Parivartan Yatra" in Bengal is scheduled in nine divisions and aimed at cover 5,000 kilometres, culminating in a rally at Kolkata's Brigade Parade Grounds, to be addressed by PM Narendra Modi in late March.

Six Union ministers, including home minister Amit Shah and defence minister Rajnath Singh, along with BJP national president Nitin Nabin and Maharashtra CM Devendra Fadnavis, will launch the yatra beginning Sunday.

People mustn't end up fearing to invest in India, says CJI

▸ Continued from page 1

CJI Surya Kant said, "There must be an atmosphere in the country where investors feel encouraged to invest. Today coal-based power plants are not encouraged. We cannot do without nuclear energy. So, there must be a balance in the approach — national interest vs hypothetical fears."

He added, "We should not create an atmosphere where people will fear to invest in India because the courts here interfere in everything. The litigation drags on and the projects become unviable despite huge investments."

Justice Bagchi said, "these are policy decisions — what should be our energy basket. Whether the policy suffers bias or is unconstitutional could be determined on scrutiny. But given the fact that the world has become a global village where electricity is traded across the border."

He added, "Show us the regulatory framework on civil liability in countries like the US, Europe and Japan. When electricity is traded across borders, the regulatory framework in India must be compatible with those in other countries." Senior advocate Kapil Sibal attempted to interject in support of Bhushan, but the SC bench stopped him saying "let Bhushan assist us."

Cal HC seeks state report on Suvendu 'harassment'

Kolkata: The Calcutta high court sought a report from the state govt on Friday over alleged harassment faced by leader of opposition in the assembly, Suvendu Adhikari, outside the CEO's office on Tuesday, including action taken against the miscreants, reports **Subrata Chattoraj**. It was alleged that shoes were hurled at Adhikari by protesters when he was entering the CEO's office. His counsel submitted that no action was taken even though police were present on the premises.

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Former New Zealand PM Jacinda Ardern, who won int'l acclaim for her handling of Covid-19 pandemic, moves to Australia after a stint in the US

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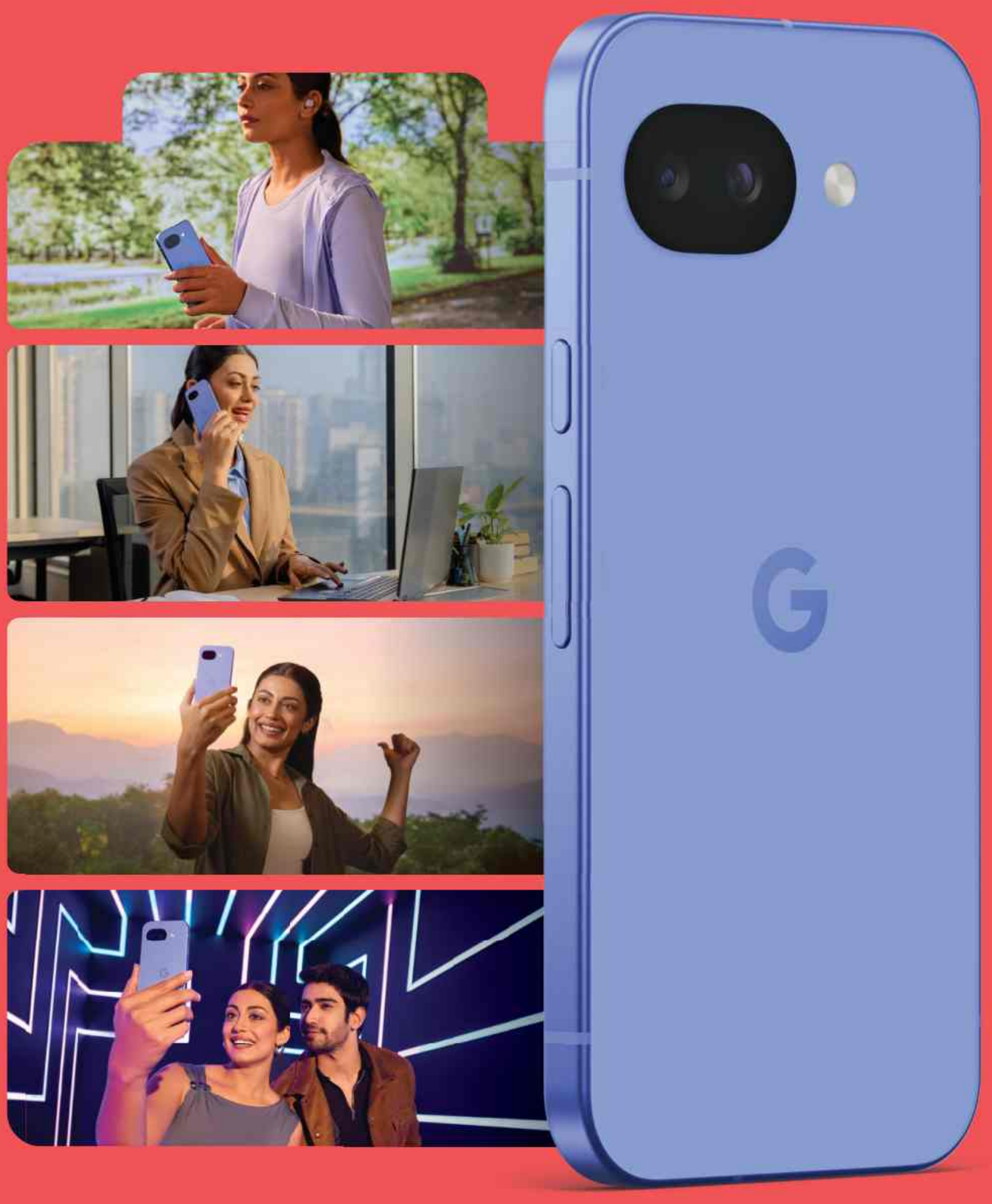

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The content and data in the reports below are fictitious to highlight the importance of proactive oral hygiene. It bears no resemblance to any place, person, or occasion.

SINGER CANCELS SOLD-OUT CONCERT FOLLOWING GUM INFLAMMATION | **INFECTED MOLAR CAUSES DIRECTOR TO MISS OWN FILM PREMIERE** | **LEAD SURGEON PULLED FROM MINISTER'S SURGERY DUE TO DENTAL EMERGENCY**

T20 Shocker: Star Batsman Battles *'Toothache Terror'* During Tournament

With the major T20 tournament currently underway, the team is fine-tuning strategies and aiming for glory. Yet an unusual concern has emerged from the training camp—one entirely unrelated to form or fitness.

The batsman, celebrated for his dynamic play, was spotted wincing after unleashing a thunderous cover drive. "He started blaming a 'sharp jolt' in his molar for missing a straight ball," quipped the team's coach. "I even saw him rub his cheek vigorously mid-over, muttering about 'wisdom gone wrong'!" This dental drama highlighted a crucial, often overlooked aspect of peak athletic performance: oral health. Even elite athletes suffer when oral health fails as it can cause systemic inflammation, which slows down recovery and impacts physical performance.

"Every time I'd charge down the track, I'd instinctively clench my jaw, and boom—a sudden reminder of my protesting molar! My focus would shatter," the batsman confessed. Initially sceptical, the batsman was introduced to a comprehensive oral hygiene regimen, which has been a game-changer. "It's like having an extra fielder in your mouth, protecting against those sneaky, painful 'loose balls' of dental issues!"

As the team competes in this crucial T20 tournament, the star batsman is back to his explosive best, his focus unblemished, his smile brighter than ever. So, as fans rally behind the team, remember that a small change in your daily routine, much like this player's adoption of effective oral care, can make all the difference between a wince and a winning smile.

Wedding Postponed After Bride Develops Acute *Gum Infection*

A day meant for celebration turned into a medical emergency when a wedding had to be postponed after the bride was rushed to the hospital with a severe gum infection. The devastating news, delivered just hours before the ceremony, left guests surprised and the couple heartbroken, highlighting the critical impact of oral health on even the most significant life events.

The bride, who had been experiencing discomfort for several days, saw her condition rapidly deteriorate, necessitating immediate medical attention. Doctors confirmed a serious gum infection, requiring urgent treatment and making it impossible for her to proceed with the wedding as planned. The unforeseen health crisis has cast a pall over what was meticulously planned to be a perfect day, forcing an indefinite postponement of the nuptials.

This unfortunate incident serves as a stark reminder of the often-underestimated importance of consistent oral hygiene. While many focus on cosmetic dental care, the health of one's gums is fundamental to overall well-being and can have far-reaching consequences if neglected. Conditions like gum infections, often stemming from germ build-up, can escalate quickly, leading to significant pain and disruption. Regular and thorough oral care, which actively targets and reduces germ build-up, can help prevent such distressing situations.

The couple now faces the challenge of rescheduling their special day, with the bride's recovery being the immediate priority. This painful experience underscores that prioritising dental health is not just about a bright smile, but about safeguarding one's health and preventing life-altering disruptions.

From Boardroom to Bankruptcy: The Unspoken Truth About *Bad Breath's* Impact

Business failures often stem from market shifts, financial mismanagement or competition. However, the subtle impact of oral odour, a rarely discussed but significant factor, can also contribute to a company's downfall.

Despite strong market standing and sound strategies, a successful consulting firm's performance inexplicably declined. Sources reveal the founder, a brilliant strategist, developed severe oral malodour.

This issue subtly impacted interactions. In high-stakes negotiations, the pervasive odour created discomfort, shifting focus from discussions to the unpleasant distraction. This strained communication, eroding trust and confidence. Clients sought business elsewhere, partners became less enthusiastic, and employees struggled. "You could sense the discomfort in the room, especially during long strategy sessions. No one wanted to address it directly, but it did affect morale and interactions. Over time, it influenced how frequently team members chose to engage in extended discussions or close-door meetings," said a senior employee, speaking on condition of anonymity. Sources indicate the firm's reputation suffered, and the founder became isolated.

This highlights a fundamental truth: senses profoundly influence human interaction.

Good oral hygiene is crucial for communication and professional respect. Beyond business, it fosters intimacy, confidence and overall health, as poor oral hygiene links to serious systemic conditions.

This story is a stark reminder: oral hygiene, though seemingly minor, is critical for professional presence, effective communication and business success. It's time for this unspoken truth to be acknowledged in business discussions, emphasising that personal well-being directly correlates with professional perception and, ultimately, the bottom line. This often-overlooked detail can truly make or break a venture.

Student Misses Board Exam Due To *Untreated Cavities*

A 15-year-old student was forced to leave his board examination midway after severe pain from an untreated cavity made it impossible for him to continue writing the paper.

According to family members, the pain worsened overnight and became unbearable during the exam. He was taken to a dentist shortly afterwards.

Doctors say such cases are not uncommon among teenagers, many of whom overlook early signs of decay. Left untreated, cavities can progress gradually without obvious symptoms at first. However, once the decay reaches the inner layers of the tooth, it can lead to sharp pain, inflammation and, in some cases, infection, affecting routine activities. Regular check-ups, limiting sugar intake and brushing twice daily with a dual zinc plus arginine toothpaste are key to preventing these dental problems before they start.

While the student is recovering, the incident highlights how untreated dental problems can disrupt important academic milestones.

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*As per Kanter Dental problems study 2019. **vs. ordinary non-antigerm fluoride toothpastes, with 4 weeks twice daily use. ***Plaque reduction vs non-antigerm Fluoride toothpaste after 3 months continued use.

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